



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07484844 5



THE
IMMORTAL
GARLAND

1. The first is the fact that the
2. second is the fact that the
3. third is the fact that the
4. fourth is the fact that the
5. fifth is the fact that the
6. sixth is the fact that the
7. seventh is the fact that the
8. eighth is the fact that the
9. ninth is the fact that the
10. tenth is the fact that the

11

12

10
15000

hsk
hsk

Appletons'
Town and Country
Library

No. 282

THE IMMORTAL GARLAND

BY ANNA R. BROWN.

A Cosmopolitan Comedy.

Appletons' Town and Country Library.

12mo. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 50 cents.

This bright, ingenious, and charming story will rank among the most entertaining examples of summer fiction. The scenes are laid in Paris and on the New England coast in the summer of 1898. There are adventures which involve curious mystifications, in addition to the development of the love story, and the reader is kept in suspense up to the ending of a fresh and delightful tale.

Sir Mark. A Tale of the First Capital.

16mo. Cloth, 75 cents.

"A remarkably pretty story, with enough real romance and enough fighting and rescuing to please the lover of lovers of the days of chivalry."—*New York Mail and Express*.

"A story of marked originality."—*Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

"An entrancing novelette, good as a story and good as literature. . . . A delightful bit of fiction."
—*Philadelphia Press*.

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

APR. 6 1900

F

THE IMMORTAL GARLAND

A STORY OF AMERICAN LIFE

BY

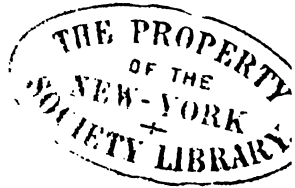
ANNA ROBESON BROWN

AUTHOR OF

SIR MARK, A COSMOPOLITAN COMEDY, ETC.

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but sinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat."

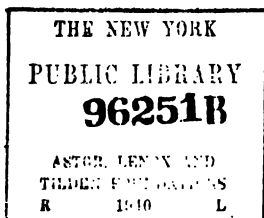
JOHN MILTON



NEW YORK
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

1900

20



COPYRIGHT, 1900,
By D. APPLETON AND COMPANY.

All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

BOOK FIRST

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—TWO MOTHERS	1
II.—TWO SONS	11
III.—UNCLE AND NEPHEW	21
IV.—MARRIAGE IN THE ABSTRACT	30
V.—GILBERT AND MRS. LEIGHTON	36
VI.—SCOTT DOES NOT.	48
VII.—ALICE AND HER BROTHER.	57
VIII.—INSTINCT AND INTELLECT	61
IX.—THE BUSY YEARS	70

BOOK SECOND

X.—PHILIPPA	83
XI.—PHILIPPA THINKS	98
XII.—A TRIO OUT OF TUNE	106
XIII.—SCOTT IS ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED	121
XIV.—ENTERTAINMENT AT THE SCOTTS'	127
XV.—VALENTINE AND SCOTT	141
XVI.—MRS. BENTLEY CALLS ON PHILIPPA	152
XVII.—AFTERNOON TEA	164
XVIII.—THE FRIENDS	178
XIX.—FAME IS THE SPUR	185

CHAPTER	PAGE
XX.—TRISTRAM AND ISEULT	195
XXI.—THE VOICE OF KUEVENAL.	203
XXII.—DICK AND VALENTINE	212

BOOK THIRD

XXIII.—JOY	222
XXIV.—AMBITION	234
XXV.—POWER	242
XXVI.—VALENTINE GROWS	253
XXVII.—HAMLET	261
XXVIII.—THE CROSSROADS	272
XXIX.—GILBERT CHOOSES HIS WAY	284
XXX.—VALENTINE	294
XXXI.—ONE FALLS	304
XXXII.—THE TWO WOMEN MEET, AND GILBERT PAUSES	314

THE IMMORTAL GARLAND

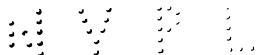
BOOK FIRST

CHAPTER I

TWO MOTHERS

FIFTY years ago Bishopton, New Jersey, was a suburban place of some importance. A noted ecclesiastic then made it his home, and had contributed to its architecture and atmosphere a flavor which it never completely lost. Fashion changed, yet Bishopton still called its church a cathedral, and became even now on occasion, a Mecca for clergymen of a certain denomination. Surprisingly few of the big, placid houses on the shady river bank remained untenanted, and the small society of the place succeeded in preserving its Old World individuality in larger measure than is usual, during this time of rapid changes.

Among the notable houses, one differed from the rest in that it stood some distance from the river, and could not, therefore, share the aristocratic retirement of "the Bank." It was good sized and square, built of wood and stucco imitating stone, elevated upon a mound of turf, and topped by a futile cupola. A broad piazza, hung with creepers, ran around three sides; its steep tin roof was painted red and shadowed by the soft boughs of a tall elm, which drooped in at the very windows. Behind the house was an acre or more of splendid trees, which might better have



screened its ugliness from the road; but fifty years back privacy was no great luxury, and it was the fashion to assert one's self, and place one's residence where it could be seen by the passer-by. Then the Carne house had been a "place," but now plainly its best days had departed. The single man of all work had enough to do to keep drives and paths neat, so the hedges and creepers thrived unchecked, making green bowers and festoons.

The present owner's income was too small to let her keep the property up to its old-time level. A widow in moderate circumstances, with two children, Mrs. Carne was just able to live comfortably in inexpensive Bishopton during the education of her boy and girl. As she was somewhat fond of saying, she had been brought up "rather differently," a phrase which delicately conveyed a sense of disappointment. If you inquired, Bishopton would tell you that her father was a Berkeley, whom tradition depicted as a whimsical old gentleman with one eye, and a talent for caustic criticism of his neighbours. Bishopton would assure you that he might have been seen any day, from the railroad train, inspecting his pasture lands, clad in a scarlet-flannel dressing gown and a high silk hat. His manner of moving his head, with its one little eye, gave him somewhat the appearance of a dignified rooster, and those who lived with him knew that he was certainly never at a loss for something to peck at. Mr. Berkeley had been wealthy, and his daughter's girlhood was chiefly passed in more brilliant places than Bishopton, where she came as a widow to make her home. Therefore she had been comparatively little known, but as a woman of capacity she quickly gained a position of influence in that small society. She was felt to have attained a level of serenity above other women with small means, and they wondered how she accomplished it. Criticism

of Mrs. Carne was general, tempered always by a certain awe. Her boy and girl were figures in the young life of the place, which was intimate and busy, like all young life in small towns; but their mother gave the impression of one who had stepped aside out of the path of the Fates. Her superiority over worried and anxious womankind lay in her philosophy. Its basis was the conviction that whatever people wanted to do they always did; and the principle was one she went to meet and never wasted a moment in combating.

The front door of the Carne house stood hospitably wide, letting the light airs play in and out of the broad hallway. This first warm day of May brought with it a vitality in the air and sunshine which made it seem possible to watch the very buds expand, and the creeper uncurl its transparent tendrils. Within doors the air was chillier than outside, particularly in the long, dark, rarely used parlour, which occupied the right side of the house. In the smaller morning room across the hall the tall windows were open, making the temperature more pleasant, and thus it came to be occupied this morning by the owner and her friend and neighbour, Mrs. Cushing. The two were accustomed to spend many hours together in long silences, broken by short conversations on the subject of their children. They rarely talked of anything else, for they touched few other topics on common ground.

The room was peaceful and old-fashioned; the hues of its chintz coverings and curtains had become soft and faded. The furniture was stuffed and padded shapelessly; in one corner stood a tall, old secretary. There was a bowl of white and purple violets on a little table. Life seemed to have tossed these two women high up in this sheltered nook, out of reach of the waves. They were both still young. Mrs. Carne had a snow-white lock in her dark hair. She lay upon a sofa, dressed in a flowing wrapper of softest shade of

lavender, with exquisite ruffles which fell over her long, thin hands. She lay perfectly quiet, no twitching, no fidgeting; her feet never stirred the purple afghan that covered them. Her face was colourless with clean-cut, handsome features and bright, dark eyes, whose glance was the only restless thing about her. Her mouth parted in a little cynical, amused smile, which her children used to dread. She talked in a level, measured fashion, and her voice was one of her charms. Her manner had a distant, suitable impersonality. For years her attitude toward life had been that of mere spectator, amused and interested by the doings of others, but holding them off from close or vital contact. This habit of mind was apt to affirm itself when in the presence of one so personal as Mrs. Cushing.

Mrs. Cushing was one of those women whose dress seems always ill suited to the season. On this occasion it was of black stuff, and made her look too warm. She was rosy and plump, with placid eyes and a mind in a continual state of perplexed irrelevance. The connection between her thoughts was known only to herself; she condensed into her speech the bald outcome of a most hazy and intricate involution of ideas. Her conversation, therefore, although English, was not understood without practice. Like her friend, she was a widow with a small income, but here the resemblance ceased. The two women had met almost daily for years, yet were come no nearer intimacy than a sort of mutual tolerance. Mrs. Carne shocked Mrs. Cushing; Mrs. Cushing amused Mrs. Carne. Mrs. Cushing's only child, a boy, absorbed her every energy and thought, while Mrs. Carne's boy and girl went their way, to the impersonal amusement of their mother. These extremes resulted, as so often in life, in a state of affairs nearly identical. They were neither of them intimate with their children, the one from

over-, the other from under-solicitude, and Mrs. Cushing's elaborate plans for Dick were apt to land her in the same bog of inaction which was reached by the indifference of Mrs. Carne. The two continued to meet, to discuss, to differ, and to part without conclusions. Propinquity played its part. However the woman across the way may differ from you in respect to her church, her children, and her housekeeping, she remains the woman across the way. The conversation between Mrs. Carne and Mrs. Cushing had for each the comforting potency of regularity; it rose and set, waxed and waned, with astronomical inevitability. If their intercourse lacked the charm of novelty it had compensating advantages, for each knew the other's limitations, and habit had in time laid the foundation for a species of friendship between them.

There had been unbroken silence in the room for at least half an hour, when it was disturbed by the clapping-to of a door overhead, the clatter of descending heels, and a sound of youthful laughter. Two boys came downstairs, passed the open door of the morning-room without a pause, and went out through the front door and along the driveway. They walked briskly, Dick Cushing's hand resting upon the shoulder of Gilbert Carne, and as they passed seemed to give the impression chiefly of arms and legs. Mrs. Cushing bent forward over her work to catch the last glimpse of them through the nearest window.

"Dick is growing so tall," she remarked in a tone of much satisfaction; then, receiving no answer, "I suppose Alice is at her painting?"

"I suppose so," replied Mrs. Carne, who had neither turned nor stirred; "she usually is."

"She has got that room—her studio—very prettily arranged."

"It's up so many flights," said Mrs. Carne, "I haven't been there since she altered it."

Silence threatened to fall again, but Mrs. Cushing had some information to gain. During conversation it was her habit to wander from remark to remark, and only in the pauses to remember what it was ~~that~~ she actually wished to say.

"Does Mr. Godfrey Carne come to-day?" she asked, dropping her sewing in her lap.

"Yes; we expect him late this afternoon. I hope Gilbert has not gone off for the day. He ought to be here to welcome his uncle."

Her tone was perfectly equable and resigned, as if to imply that if Gilbert were off for the day there was nothing to be done about it.

"They are probably at home, poring over Dick's poetry," said Mrs. Cushing, who was usually in a position to give Mrs. Carne information about her children. "Dick writes wonderful poetry—so Gilbert says." She took up her sewing again. "Gilbert criticises it, you know."

"Verses!" Mrs. Carne's tone was meditative. "They are odd young people really, aren't they? Alice spending half the day up in that loft, and Gilbert so determined to go on the stage; they do surprise me, certainly. It seems strange such a pair should belong to me!"

"Well, Mr. Cushing wrote lots of lovely verses to me when we were engaged," declared Mrs. Cushing, resenting a contemptuous shadow in this speech. The faint cynical smile hovered on Mrs. Carne's lip.

"I used to sketch a little, as a girl, myself," she said, and moved her hands slightly, smoothing the ruffles over them. "And the children's father appeared once or twice in amateur theatricals, I believe, when they were the fashion. These things are very nice to occupy young people when they have nothing better to do. But we were never perfervid about them, like these oddities of mine."

"But Dick does read me his verses, too!" Mrs. Cushing said eagerly, as if the contrary had been asserted; "and *of course* I enjoy them. But he will not listen when I tell him he would find business in town just as interesting. And yet it is true. I know that men who go into stocks and things become perfectly *absorbed* in them. Why, I've heard that it gives them nervous prostration sometimes, and Dick would like to be rich!" She sighed and shook her head. Long practice enabled Mrs. Carne to gather from the above speech the heads of what Dick's mother desired to convey.

"Why do you discuss it with him? They will do as they like, of course; people always do. When Gilbert wants to read to me, or Alice to talk art, I always say, 'My dear children, it's very bright of you, I know, but really you can't expect me to take it all so seriously.'"

"But one ought to take an interest," objected Mrs. Cushing.

"Why?" asked Mrs. Carne serenely, and her friend was silent. The little discussion ended, as usual, by bringing Mrs. Cushing to the borders of an argument, thus rendering her helpless. She resumed presently:

"I hear your brother-in-law is rich. Will he do anything for the children?"

"He gave my husband to understand that he would. But, of course, one never knows, and I have never mentioned it to him. If Alice wants to go to Europe and Gilbert wants something else, there will have to be an understanding with their Uncle Godfrey."

"I shouldn't think you would like Gilbert to make the theatre his profession," commented Mrs. Cushing, deflected as usual.

"I don't know that Gilbert's profession matters," said Gilbert's mother.

"Mr. Carne might make him his heir, mightn't he? Has he other ties?"

"Who has been talking to you?" smiled Mrs. Carne, turning her head for the first time. "Godfrey is a bachelor. There was some sort of story about him twelve years ago—something disagreeable—which upset my husband very much. I never could see why; it was no affair of ours."

"What was it? Is it over now?" Mrs. Cushing asked these questions, feeling that much was lacking in the flavor of this communication. In other hands it would have been worth an ejaculation, but somehow from Mrs. Carne the most exciting piece of gossip grew pallid.

"I believe he had a mistress," she replied calmly, and Mrs. Cushing gasped out a helpless "Oh!" Accustomed as she was to polite euphemism on such a subject, she felt the other's bluntness as unfair. She could not now pursue the story without appearing grossly inquisitive; and as woman to woman Mrs. Carne seemed inconsiderate.

"It's quite a coincidence both should have rich relatives," Mrs. Cushing said, returning to her own affairs. "Dick's cousin—little Philippa, you know—my dear, she has millions! When she returns from Europe she will make us a visit, of course—poor child, an orphan! I dare say it's foolish of me, but I can't help hoping she and Dick may like each other!" Reply to this was prevented by a step on the piazza, and a big, broad-shouldered, solemn young man came into the hall, and stood in the doorway before the two women.

"Is Miss Carne in her studio?" he asked deferentially, after an exchange of "good mornings." Mrs. Cushing nodded and smiled in her kind way, but Mrs. Carne did not even move her head to look at him. She answered from where she lay, without stirring:

"Oh, yes, I think you will find her there. She is painting you or something, isn't she? Yes. You can go right up, Mr. Scott."

The young man bowed and departed. They heard his ascending footfalls grow fainter and cease.

"He sees a good deal of Alice?" suggested Mrs. Cushing, threading her needle.

"Does he?"

"Oh, I don't mean that he isn't a very nice, steady young fellow," Mrs. Cushing protested, although the query had been of the quietest. "I'm told the Dobeys like him so much—and the Dobney boy has never done so well! Still, he *is* poor, and he *does* see a great deal of Alice!"

There was no answer, and Mrs. Carne had closed her eyes. "I should think you might be afraid—young people, you know——" Mrs. Cushing began, and stopped. Mrs. Carne's eyes slowly opened.

"I hardly know him myself," she spoke in her most impersonal manner. "I dare say he's very poor, and very estimable. And I've no doubt he is the best tutor in the world for the Dobney boy. As to his seeing Alice, you know that's *Alice's* business."

"Then you don't mind?"

"Mind? Why, I've nothing to do with it!"

Mrs. Cushing stared at her. "I never heard of such a thing in all my life," she cried honestly. Mrs. Carne never took offence; it was not worth while. She smiled a little, patiently and wearily.

"Did your mother's opposition do any good?" she asked gently. "Didn't you do as you liked in the end? Well, so will Alice. Then what use is it? Alice seems a sensible sort of girl, and you can't deny that it affects her more than me."

"Still, I think——" Mrs. Carne's cynical smile checked this protest of her neighbour at the outset.

"You women do fuss so over your husbands and

children," she remarked distantly, smoothing her ruffles with a slow, steady motion. "I've learned not to let all these things worry me, and it's much better. They'll do as they like, and it's *their* business. You make a mistake to let it affect you so, and throw you off your balance. I remember——" A flash of younger sensibility, and perhaps of not wholly forgotten pain, quivered for one second on her face, and furnished her friend, had she desired it, with a key to her attitude. But Mrs. Cushing's patience with Mrs. Carne always gave out at a certain moment, and she rarely remained beyond that point. She rose, wrapped up her work, and took her leave, her round face solemn with protest.

"If Gilbert is with Dick," Mrs. Carne called after her, "tell him dinner is at half past one, unless he chooses to stay with you."

When her neighbour had gone, Mrs. Carne laid back her head with a quiet, satisfied sigh, closed her eyes, and in a few moments was tranquilly asleep.

CHAPTER II

TWO SONS

GILBERT did choose to remain for dinner at the Cushings'. To the two lads this was a day to be marked with a white stone. The mail had brought Dick his first acceptance, inclosing a check for the sonnet he had sent to a leading magazine. This tangible result of so many dreams exhilarated Gilbert no less than the poet, who could scarcely read the civil typewritten slip without an approach to tears.

When Mrs. Cushing returned, the news came out. She heard it with an amusing mixture of awe and pride, for she belonged to a generation which did not write for the magazines. Hitherto she had looked upon Dick's verse making with doubt, as a cloak for idleness and mischief, but a check for ten dollars is not to be despised. When she realized in her heart that *she* would never have given so much for any sonnet (and the editor was no relative), her son's work rose at once greatly in her esteem.

"I think it's wonderful," she declared, and Dick flushed, turning his head aside awkwardly to hide it. There is a certain shyness in young authorship which is only overcome by success, and therefore it is still common and still constantly outraged. Brusque uncles think nothing of slapping one on the back, and remarking at the top of their lungs, "So I hear you've written a poem, and got it published? Well, well!"

Mrs. Cushing's manner was not so rough, yet it

caused her son an indefinable wince. She spoke of the circumstance in the baldest language, and even praised the editor for his discrimination.

"And what is the name of it?" she demanded. Dick looked at Gilbert, who nodded encouragingly. Gilbert was experiencing all the delights of success, with none of the responsibilities. But the subject was still awful to the poet.

"Astarte of the Syrians," he mumbled, looking away from his mother.

"Of the what?" she queried, puzzled.

"It's from a poem of Rossetti's," Gilbert explained, coming to Dick's aid; "Astarte was the same as Ashtaroth."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Cushing. Then she added consolingly: "It's awfully bright of you, Dick, just the same. How do you ever think of those things? Your father *would* have been pleased! I remember his doing some verses—On a Snowfall, I think it was called. I dare say it's much the same sort of thing, although it seems to me I've heard the name of yours before."

"Perhaps in the Bible," suggested Gilbert. "She was the Aphrodite of the Greeks."

"The one in the parlour?"

Gilbert explained patiently, and Mrs. Cushing's face cleared.

"Yes, it must have been the Bible, of course. There's a whole section about the gods of the heathen at the back. It's such fine print; Dickie, dear, such fine print will hurt your eyes. She wore horns, you say? Now I remember. There were sacred groves and a sacred calf. It's all in the Bible."

She paused to fix the names in her memory, and to rehearse the little speech, which would be requisite next Sunday after church.

"Dick's poem? It's called Ashtaroth of the Assyrians—and it's all in the Bible. Wasn't he bright?"

She and Gilbert sustained the conversation during dinner. Dick was sunk in vague and pleasing dreams, conscious every time his sleeve brushed the pocket where he had put the letter. He would run his finger tip furtively along the edge of the stiff paper, with the inward thrill that it was there, that he had only to unfold it, and he would again be assured of its astonishing contents. He ate little and said less, but his sensitive face was tremulous with a smile, half hidden, half revealed, like the sparkle of sunlight upon water. His silence and absorption were not unusual, and his mother let them pass without comment. She was in the habit of talking to Gilbert Carne as if he were twice Dick's age, when in reality there were but three years between them. Gilbert was nearly twenty. Like Dick, he was tall and slender, but much more strongly built, and the odd cast of his features made him look older. He was very dark, with thick black hair, large black eyes under flexible brows, a thin, sensitive mouth, and a lean, long jaw. The boy's face gave an almost equal impression of magnetism and hardness, which served to lend it a strong individuality. He had a curious firmness, coolness, and grasp which seemed to be the development of his mother's impersonal qualities. He had also inherited, however, very deep and strong affections which were to govern him later, although at present it must be allowed they lay somewhat in abeyance, and he was not over-scrupulous in wielding a certain power which he was conscious of possessing in a marked degree. This power was an intellectual understanding of others, which imagination heightened, and which tolerance would sweeten into sympathy. Gilbert was alertly aware of everything about himself, so he was aware of this, and conscious of his power over those with whom he came into contact. During the last two years he had begun to play with this faculty tentatively, to

sound the other person, to make the complementary, the observant remark, to watch the flash follow his insight. Gilbert saw those about him helpless in his hands whenever his comprehension supplied their inadequacies. It was as if Nature had given them the ability to draw only the segment of an arc, which he could extend to the perfect circle. It may be readily understood that the boy nature suffered in a measure from this premature consciousness of force. At his age the line between egoism and egotism is ill-defined, and his strong character had its many crudities, its dogmatic intolerance, and undue self-analysis. Any good observer would have noted these, but might not have seen the impersonal courage, the reliance on truth, the fine spirit, which distinguished the lad. A woman like Mrs. Cushing relied on him in many ways without at all knowing why.

"So you are determined to go on the stage?" she asked him.

"Yes; in the autumn," Gilbert affirmed.

"I don't understand it. Why should any one want to go and play at being somebody else? For a living, too! And Alice?"

"Alice will go working on at the Academy of Fine Arts. Some day I want to send her to Paris."

"Won't your uncle do that?" asked Mrs. Cushing, recollecting the morning's talk. Gilbert's face clouded.

"I hope to make enough to do it myself," he replied a little stiffly.

"Dear, dear! And I suppose *this* is the end of Dick in business!"

"I must go to New York!" Dick broke in here. "Mother, you *must* consent! When my name gets better known I'll publish a volume of poems. That will be, say, two years at the outside. And, mother, New York's the literary centre of this country."

The name meant to him what London must have

meant to Johnson and Garrick when they first set out. The other two did not know enough to smile, and Dick sank back in a reverie which lasted until they left the table.

Mrs. Cushing's house, though smaller than Mrs. Carne's, which it adjoined, had the advantage of a position upon the river bank. Across the Delaware the outlook had some placid charm, and although a road ran directly in front of the house it was too seldom used to interfere with privacy. From this road to the river was a stretch of turf shaded by a large beech, and here the two lads betook themselves. Under Gilbert's arm was a blank book, proclaiming itself upon the title page as *The Poetical Works of Richard Waldron Cushing, Volume III.* He turned the pages as he set his back against the beech trunk, but was more inclined to talk than read.

Dick rolled over on the grass, and rubbed his head against Gilbert's knee.

"I say, Gib, won't it sound fine some day in your biography?" He sat up, his eyes sparkling as he gesticulated, "'Mr. Carne's boyhood was spent in a New Jersey town.'"

Gilbert laughed. "How about yours? *Cushing*. (Dickie, when they call you *Cushing*, you're famous.) 'Cushing's verse has all the depth of that mighty river by whose side his boyish hours were passed!'"

"Oh, the devil!" cried Dick fervently, and both laughed aloud at these visions of the future.

"There's Alice, too; won't we three make the old hole famous, though?"

"Alice has the best chance to be heard from first," Gilbert said more gravely. "She's farther on."

"But then she's the eldest. And you may have Scott yet for a brother-in-law," said Dick, with the offhand air of experience. He had turned on his back, with his hat over his eyes.

•

"What do you think about it?" Gilbert felt his brotherly responsibilities.

"Oh, it's coming," said the sage under the hat. "You know how these things are."

"I wonder if I ought to say anything?"

"I think it's a brother's duty," said Dick (who had no sisters).

"Alice is two years older, though," Gilbert said; "she'd say it was none of my business."

Dick rolled over and sat up. "Pooh! Aren't you the man of the family? You have to take hold of women or they'd always let their feelings run away with them."

"I don't know," replied Gilbert doubtfully. He knew Alice, and had an instinctive shyness on such a matter. He was a little older than his companion.

"Talking about Alice makes me all the more decided," Dick went on as he turned his light-coloured eyes on his companion. "I can't help seeing as I read," he continued in tones of conviction, "that all those fellows, Shelley, and Byron, and Keats, you know, and Alfred de Musset, whenever they got into trouble it was always because of some woman. I've made up *my* mind to avoid everything of that kind, and devote my life to work. And the way to do it is to take it in time. All those men let it go on, you know, till they were deep in. What I'm going to do, and what you had better do too, Gib, is to take it in time. You'd better resolve now that whenever you feel an attraction of that sort you will go right away from her."

"But, surely——" Gilbert began and stopped. As he looked down upon his friend's delicate profile against the grass it was in his mind to say that there had been known sentimental experiences in the lives of certain great men whose strength of mind had equalled, if not surpassed, that of Mr. Richard Cushing; therefore—but here Dick interrupted him.

•

"The thing to do is to be resolved," he repeated, rolling over on his back again, "and to stick to it. That's simple enough. My life is going to be the true poet's—just work, Gib, and no distractions."

The breeze stirred Dick's fine nimbus of hair, and his eyes showed no doubt. Gilbert tried hard to seize a fleeting impression, which was really his sense of a weakness in the other's temperament, but he lacked the experience to give it a name.

"Let's go back to the studio," he suggested by way of diversion, and Dick sprang up at once.

"I was going to copy the sonnet for Alice first."

"You can send her a printed copy," Gilbert reminded him, and a flash passed between them at the thought.

"Perhaps your uncle has come," Dick observed as they came up to the driveway of the Carne house.

Gilbert slackened step. "I hope not," said he, as if involuntarily.

"You don't like your Uncle Godfrey, Gib?"

"No, I don't." The reply sounded final, but it did not satisfy Dick.

"You haven't seen him for years," he began to protest, but a glance at Gilbert's face checked him. It was distinctly noncommunicative, and Dick felt rebuffed. The confidence between the two boys was unequal, and had always been so.

They passed in silence down the lane, through the quiet house, and up to the door of the attic which Alice used as a studio. It stood ajar, and they entered without ceremony. The room justified Mrs. Cushing's praise. The sloping roof was hung with vigorous oil and charcoal sketches against a background of soft gray-green. There was little furniture, but the businesslike air of the place framed suitably enough the figure of its owner. She stood before her canvas in front of the north window, painting with a decided

touch, free equally from languor and slapdash. She gave the boys a smile of greeting, but was evidently absorbed, glancing from time to time at her model, the big, solemn young man who sat uneasily in an arm-chair.

The newcomers threw themselves upon a cushioned seat, and waited for a pause. Gilbert's eyes ran round the room, and rested affectionately on the tall, robust figure of the girl. Alice Carne was built on a larger scale than her brother. She had a large, long-fingered, capable hand, which looked as if it might easily crush his thin, nervous one. Her colouring was lighter and fresher, her features heavier than his; she lacked his keen and delicate responsiveness of expression, but her own was not without attraction and value. She had abundant brown hair drawn loosely back, serene gray eyes, and a frank, untroubled smile. Her gray dress was partly hidden by an ample blue-checked apron. All her movements were brisk and decided, and in her vigour, vitality, and enthusiasm she seemed the personification of untried energy and youth. There was a wholesome freshness about the girl, whose simplicity made her seem the younger of the two.

Her model, a clean-shaven man of thirty, had good features, but he was marked already by the student's wrinkle and contracted eyelid. He looked as if he had been born with eyeglasses. His voice and manner lacked freedom, and kept suggesting the checkrein of petty conventions. His expression was formal and persevering. He was kind, but sententious, and wholly lacking in a sense of humour. Mr. Randolph Scott was a product of a small university, where he held the position of instructor, which he supplemented by acting as tutor during the summer months. He had recently published a book on some moot point of history, which was beginning to be talked of. He was interested in Gilbert and Alice—particularly in Alice. She

eluded him, whereas he doled out advice to Gilbert and was wholly in the grasp of Gilbert's supple brain. His interest was kindly, for he knew that his experience of life would be valuable to this odd pair, but his kindness was apt to lack intelligent understanding.

On Dick he looked with disfavour, but this same kindness led him to make advances to the boy, and to offer criticism and correction of his poems. Unfortunately, he succeeded in antagonizing the poet so completely that Dick almost made him a butt, which was both ungrateful and unjust. Once, when Scott asked for the latest verses, Dick sent him what purported to be the translation of a Greek fragment, accompanied by footnotes composed by Gilbert and himself, with the aid of the dictionary and a volume of Swinburne. Imagine Dick, all his fancy winged and unrestrained in this mischief!

"This'll fetch the old boy," he declared with joy.

"If your mother catches us——"

"*She* don't know enough to be shocked," said Dick coolly. "I'll run the risk anyhow, Gib. I can't stand that old elephant trampling over my poems and flattening 'em out."

Needless to say, Scott never asked Dick for another specimen, and his letter accompanying the returned fragment was a very shocked and well-meant lecture on its depravity. To do the two lads justice, Scott's letter was funny in its ignorance of boy nature, and they may be pardoned for chuckling over it.

Their presence in the studio now caused a stiffening in her self-conscious model, which Alice noted immediately. She laid down her palette, and untied the strings of her apron.

"Done for to-day," she said gaily; "and you've been very patient."

"It has been a pleasure," he returned, and stood up as she came out from behind the easel.

"Really, it's very creditable, Ally," remarked the patronizing Dick, surveying the portrait critically; "the expression isn't keen and delicate enough, and is too serious, but still——"

"Good likeness," Gilbert hastened to interpose. He knew by the way Scott settled his eyeglasses that he was preparing some reply, which would give Dick further opening for mischief.

"The greatest fault," continued the irrepressible, "is that you haven't put Mr. Scott's ease of bearing into it, Ally. You've made him almost stiff."

"I had not observed any lack of ease," said Scott, "nor do I notice the stiffness to which you advert, Dick. In my opinion, Miss Carne has made a striking likeness." He stared rebukingly at Dick, at the same time bowing to Alice with impressive courtesy. Dick coughed and winked joyously at Gilbert, who punched him and whispered, "Shut up!"

At that instant came a knock. "Mr. Carne has come," said a servant's voice.

"Uncle Godfrey," Gilbert said to Alice. She returned his look with one of full comprehension.

"Go down, Gib," said she. "I must make myself tidy first." She had grown a little pale, and from Gilbert's face her eyes travelled involuntarily to Scott's. He met the look, but only with one of formal politeness.

"If he knew!" thought Alice, and was conscious of a nervous quiver.

CHAPTER III

UNCLE AND NEPHEW

THE guests slipped out by a back way. Gilbert waited at his sister's door until she was ready. As she came out he met her nervous glance reassuringly.

"Don't be afraid," said he confidently; "I'll manage it."

"I know," replied Alice, and the colour came partly back into her cheeks. There was no manner of doubt in her mind as to her slender brother's ability to "manage it." That had been too long a part of life.

"You haven't changed your mind?" Gilbert asked her gravely, as they went downstairs. "There is still time."

"No; I feel it's right." She met his glance with one of equal firmness. Brother and sister entered the sitting room with heads up and a light of purpose in their expression. Ideas take powerful hold on young and sensitive intelligences; these two shared in common a certain fineness of fibre which promised well. Their mistakes were not likely to be ignoble.

The uncle was a burly man of middle age, with a broad, reddened face, and a manner compounded of rough kindness and businesslike *brusquerie*. He sat heavily in an armchair, and Mrs. Carne, from her sofa, presented her children with a little introductory wave of the hand.

"This is my Alice," she said, "and Gilbert. Two enthusiasts, Godfrey."

She laughed a little. Alice pressed her lips tightly together, for she had less self-control than her brother.

Gilbert looked full at his mother, wondering, as often before, that she had the power to antagonize him as she did. Mr. Carne spoke to them both, as he shook hands, in a manner not without a shade of embarrassment. They talked of indifferent matters for a while, then Mrs. Carne slowly rose.

"Your uncle has something to say to you, I believe, Gilbert," she said, "so I'll leave you together. Alice!"

Her daughter did not move, and Gilbert interposed: "I think Alice had better stay, please, mamma." Mrs. Carne shrugged her shoulders at this and quietly left the room, closing the door. Her absence removed some constraint, and Mr. Carne shifted his position and asked a question or two with much heartiness. Then came a pause, and the uncle cleared his throat. "I suppose both of you know what I have come for?" he began, looking at the two young people.

"I think so," Gilbert answered in his clear voice. "Mother said you had some kind intention toward us."

Mr. Carne hurried on to his point, with an evident desire to get it over. He had seemed not to notice the pair especially, but in reality their appearance gave him satisfaction and pleasure. He was glad they were good-looking, and Alice in particular had caught his attention. "You see," said he, "I believe in a man's looking after his blood kin before anything else. You two are my brother's children, and the only family I have left. I know your business affairs, just how they stand, and I always intended to help you two to get a start in life."

"You are very kind," said Gilbert, and Alice echoed the words under her breath. She sat bolt upright, her hands clasped together, her eyes fixed on the patch of blue sky visible through an upper pane of the window, behind interlacing tree branches. Now and then her

glance sought Gilbert's, but she kept it steadily turned away from her uncle. She was stiffened by the portentous nature of the interview.

"I suppose," Mr. Carne went on, "the time has about come to decide on this start. "It's a great pity your father didn't take my advice while he lived. Things would have been very different for you two. I haven't done badly myself, and I could have shown him the ropes. Under my advice he might have made a couple of hundred thousand dollars. But there's no use discussing it; it can't be helped now."

Mr. Carne spoke in a loud voice. It was the vanity which swaggered in this speech that gave Gilbert his cue. The boy had been half lounging in a big chair; now he straightened up. He remained silent, while Alice murmured some assent.

"I confess,"—the kindness came back into Mr. Carne's face, and he smiled—"I wasn't prepared to find my niece and nephew so decided already. Your mother has been telling me that you, Gilbert, wish to go on the stage. You seem a sensible sort of boy, and I was going to suggest a clerical position in a good firm. It might be small at first, but certain. Don't you think you had better give up this theatrical notion?"

Gilbert was so long in replying that Alice shot a scared look at him. Was he tempted? and if not, where was the loyal and haughty refusal? Her brother, however, was quicker than she to see how inadequate such a refusal would be to meet so reasonable a suggestion. Also, he had his own reasons for not wishing his uncle to think him a fool.

"I might think so," was his deliberate reply, "but, unfortunately, it seems the thing I can do best. I haven't any business instinct. If I begin as a clerk, Uncle Godfrey, I'm afraid I'll die one. Apart from your interest, would it be good policy to do what I'm

not fitted for or likely to succeed in? Hadn't I better go into the work where I've the biggest chance of success, as they say everything is equally crowded and competency so rare?"

The sense of this speech, so different from the boyish flight he had expected, and so carefully adjusted to meet his point of view, was not without its effect. Mr. Carne did not, of course, capitulate, but his response was without contempt.

"Please yourself, my boy. Only don't come to me if you regret it, that's all."

"I sort of regret it now," said Gilbert thoughtfully. "I know the life is beastly. But it seems to be my bent, and I've had my start offered me already. Mr. Granger has offered me a small place in one of his travelling companies. You see how it is. Say I accepted your offer. I'd only keep the place through your influence, and when you died I'd be worse off than before."

This candid foresight, so youthfully expressed, gave Mr. Carne a start. He stared at his nephew in puzzled silence, and Gilbert smiled.

"As for your sister——"

"As for Alice?" Gilbert repeated anxiously.

"Oh, I guess art is as good as anything else for a woman," Mr. Carne remarked. Evidently it was impossible to treat this pair as he had planned, in good-natured Santa Claus fashion, state his wishes, and dismiss their gratitude with a clap on the shoulder apiece. The interview so far had not been conducted upon these lines.

"Of course, she ought to marry, but till that time comes"—he laughed his loud laugh, and Alice reddened—"if she likes to paint pictures, I see no objection. After your mother's death she'll have the house, I suppose."

"I've sold two sketches already," Alice hastened to

say, then stopped, as if frightened by the sound of her own voice.

"That's very nice indeed," said her uncle indulgently. "I'm not old-fashioned. Of course, you want something to do in this—not very lively town. Well, now I tell you what I'll do, Alice. I'll put five thousand in bank for you. You can let it roll up till you marry, or spend it, whichever you like."

"You are very generous, but——" Gilbert met his sister's eyes.

"Before you decide, we think you ought to know," Alice broke in hurriedly.

"You see, sir, we know Mrs. Leighton and Valentine," Gilbert finished in a clear voice.

Silence followed. The brother and sister looked anywhere but at their uncle, unwilling to see the effect these names might have on him. Their hearts raced.

"Well, upon—my—soul!" ejaculated Mr. Carne, staring. Then he drew a long breath, ejected it violently, and asked simply, "How?"

"Valentine poses at the Academy of Fine Arts, where Alice works in winter," Gilbert explained. "Everybody there was interested in her and the mother. They are so very poor. Once Val was sick, and the students made up a basket, and chose Alice to take it. After that she went often. They're dreadfully poor. She saw your photograph there, and heard all about it. That's how it happened."

Mr. Carne cleared his throat. "It's hard to explain," he began, and paused. It was hard to explain away before the steady gaze of this boy and girl, so terribly direct and innocent. He took refuge in anger.

"What business had you to pry into my affairs?" he broke out threateningly, his heavy cheeks growing purple. Alice shrank, but Gilbert had been expecting some such outburst.

"There was no thought of prying; it happened

quite by accident," he said, leaning back and surveying the elder man with a tingling sense of mastery. "We kept it secret, so you need not be afraid. The only reason we tell you now is to explain our own conduct; that's all."

"If you could understand that——" Forgetting his bluster, Mr. Carne rose and began to pace the floor. The two watched him, Alice fearfully, Gilbert with a certain curiosity.

"I do," the boy said at length, with a sort of quiet acquiescence which caused his uncle to glance at him; "that is—I mean I suppose it isn't unusual. I dare say lots of men have done the same sort of thing. Only, it set us, Alice and me, to thinking rather hard." He began to speak meditatively, resting his cheek on his hand. "The child, you see! That does seem hard. Val is a wonderful little thing. Anyway we looked at it, it didn't seem fair. It ought to be somebody's business, oughtn't it? Then the mother, she cared about you—she does still. You told her you couldn't marry. Then she had the child, and you got tired of her, and left her."

"How dare you speak this way before your sister!" cried Mr. Carne, and Gilbert gave a faint shrug.

"Alice has heard it all before," he said, thinking. "So it is worse to mention these things than to do them?"

"Gilbert, if you knew more of the world, you would see that a man may be obliged——" Mr. Carne floundered again.

Gilbert waited patiently. "Yes," he said, "I suppose I understand what you mean. But the wrong remains."

Mr. Carne choked, and paced faster. He was helpless so long as his nephew took no stand he could summarily demolish. He got out "None of your business."

"I know," Gilbert agreed; "so we won't talk about it any more. Only we want you to know why we can't take this money from you, as things are now. We can't help thinking of that poor woman, who has struggled so hard to keep decent, and her little girl—don't you understand?" Now that he had come to the point of what he had to say, he was boyishly unequal to the full explanation. He coloured a little, and stammered: "You—you see—we're not destitute, and we're y-young and can work. It would be an insult to you, and n-none of our business, to take it and g-give it to her. We think the best way is not to take it."

"You young fools!" his uncle exploded, and fell into a chair.

"We do thank you——" ventured Alice.

"And you mustn't think us ungrateful," Gilbert added, recovering his self-control. "We shall always remember your kindness." He spoke sincerely, for his harsh feeling had gone. Nothing softens one toward a person so much as power over him. Gilbert had firm hold on his uncle by this time, and knew it. Mr. Carne stared at the pair of them, gnawing his lip. Then he spoke quietly to Alice.

"Will you leave me alone with your brother, my dear?"

She rose, exchanging glances with her brother as she left the room. His was confident, proud, electrical. The door closed behind her in a silence of some moments' duration. Mr. Carne, surveying the young figure in the armchair with a sort of bewilderment, began to speak more quietly, using an elder man-of-the-world voice, which would have been thoroughly effective had his position been in itself more tenable:

"You're young and inexperienced, my boy—that's why I pardon you. You'll learn more as you grow older. This woman is just one of a class, and you need to mix more with the world to understand how men feel

about these things. Of course, I have not been the only man—of course not. They can't have any claim on me now."

Gilbert looked down reflectively, and shook his head. "I'm afraid you are mistaken, Uncle Godfrey. I made lots of inquiries about Mrs. Leighton. She's never been a light woman; she's kept quiet and decent, and taken care of the child. But they're so horribly poor!"

"What does she—do?"

"Sews. Val acts, too, when there's a chance. She's an awfully clever imp, when she's well."

"She's delicate, then?"

"No; but not well fed."

"Gilbert, if you could only understand——"

"I understand everything, Uncle Godfrey, except your generosity to us."

The short dialogue had been free on both sides. A third person would easily have seen in it the progress of a struggle between the two forces—experience, dullness, and authority opposed to quickness, fluency, and intellectual understanding. Gilbert sat quiet, idly playing with the tassel of the chair cover. His heart was thumping hard, his busy brain was anticipating the next step. His manner had insensibly grown more self-confident, more assured. Mr. Carne began to argue again.

"I did all that could be expected at the time. When I broke off the connection I offered her money, which she refused."

"Was that like 'one of her class,' Uncle Godfrey?"

Mr. Carne gave a short, angry laugh. "She wants money now."

"She never asked," said the lad quickly. "She doesn't even know what we decided to do. She doesn't know where you are. But we saw it going from bad to worse, and there's little Val. Alice and I simply *couldn't*; that's all."

There was nothing deliberately calculated in this speech, but it is true the boy's sense of control guided every word of it. The elder man tugged at the cords, unconscious that his nephew held them.

"Damned quixotic nonsense!" he broke out again, and there was another pause. A certain kindness in Godfrey Carne was making him uncomfortable.

"Of course, it's perfectly possible"—Gilbert spoke impersonally, and very like his mother—"that if things get desperate, Mrs. Leighton might go to you yourself. She has never suggested doing so to me, but still——"

"Do you know," said Mr. Carne irrelevantly, "that of all the impudent young scoundrels you're the worst I ever——"

"Indeed I don't mean to be, Uncle Godfrey," said Gilbert honestly, raising his dark eyes. The uncle muttered and fidgeted. Then he seemed to quiet himself and to think.

"I couldn't see her—I couldn't have a scene." He spoke as if to himself, but at this decided step Gilbert stepped alongside.

"I could do it for you," he said. The other grunted and looked at him sharply.

"You take the train to-morrow," he commanded, and it did him good to command. "I'll tell you what to do. Mind you don't bungle, and give her my address."

Gilbert acquiesced submissively. He felt strained and tired, but his uncle's air of authority elated him as a sure indication of victory. Mr. Carne felt better. After all, this young fool of a nephew had cut off his nose to spite his face, and it tickled the elder man's sense of humour that he should send the boy on such an errand. As Gilbert left the room Mr. Carne looked after him.

"Should have sent that boy to college," he thought. "Stage, indeed!"

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE IN THE ABSTRACT

It was Randolph Scott's habit, after he had dismissed his pupil at noon, to take a stroll along the river bank, where the road dwindled to a path over low, marshy meadows, fringed with willows. At a turn in the path stood a stumpy apple tree, bending its twisted branches low over the grass, and here, on fine days, Scott was apt to find Alice Carne seated before her easel. Often Gilbert was with her, sometimes reading aloud, sometimes repeating fragments of the poetry with which his head was filled. On such occasions Scott would draw near quietly, and, in response to Alice's smile of welcome, would seat himself in silence to listen. Gilbert, stretched flat on his back in the tall grass, his eyes fixed on the blue between the flickering apple leaves, would give himself up wholly to their influence and to the beauty of language. The lad's voice, clear and vibrant, with its thrill of sensitiveness, had gained Scott's admiration, and he enjoyed these recitals. But he was none the less pleased to find Alice alone.

When he came into sight along the path, on the morning after the conversation with her uncle, Alice was seated in her place, her hands lying idle. As Scott approached, she picked up her brushes and set to work on her sketch with nervous haste. Her face was tired, and there were dark circles under her eyes.

"Good morning, Miss Carne," said Scott, lifting

his hat. Alice returned the salutation, her eyes fixed in a businesslike manner on the distant prospect. She held a paint brush perpendicularly before her at arm's length, and half shut her eyes to look at it. Scott's attention was thus drawn to the firm, white curve of her wrist.

"Your brother has not joined you this lovely day," he remarked, seating himself on a root a few feet off.

"No," Alice replied; "Gilbert has gone to town to do an errand for my uncle."

"Mr. Carne is still with you?"

"He left us last night; but he sent Gilbert——He'll be back——Gilbert, I mean——on the four-o'clock express."

Scott plucked a grass blade from between his feet, and twisted it slowly in his fingers. A close observer might have noted the same evidence of strain in his face as in that of Alice herself. The wrinkles were deep between his eyebrows, and there was perplexity in his eye. Now and then he glanced at Alice, and glanced away.

The truth was that for some weeks past he had "been giving the subject serious consideration."

Once or twice he had discussed with her "marriage in the abstract," but, although they had agreed, he had received very little personal enlightenment. Undoubtedly she was a girl of sense and talent, and he was strongly attracted; but it was equally true that this attraction interfered with the programme which he had outlined for his own career. He had assured himself that he would give to the question of marriage "proper reflection and caution," and would avoid being "carried away by emotional tendencies." He corresponded with a friend upon the subject, an exercise which gratified him, for, as he very justly told himself, "it is much more thorough than the way an ordinary man would manage such an affair."

In his slow, conscientious fashion, the man was hon-

estly anxious to handle competently and with sincerity the ordering of his life; and he was not likely to be shaken by any impulse which he could understand. Deficient in humour and tact, he was placed at a constant disadvantage; his self-sacrifices were likely to be futile and to bring him no reward. The worst tendency in Scott was comprised in the fact that he took for strength of character what was merely temperament, that he gave himself credit for a course which was made possible only by his natural disposition. He saw himself controlling emotions which he had never felt.

"Miss Alice," he began, "may I talk to you a little about myself?"

"Certainly," she replied. She went through the little play with the paint brush again, to insure steadiness of touch.

"Yesterday I received a letter from the faculty at Columbia," he proceeded, with his slow fluency, "asking me to fill the chair of Modern History at that university."

"Oh, that is a great compliment! Will you accept?"

"I think there is no doubt of it."

"I heartily congratulate you," said Alice, and he bowed a formal acknowledgment. "You like the work?"

"As you are aware, it is that for which I have so long been fitting myself. It will be an enjoyable position, and, let me add, the salary is nearly double that which I receive at present."

"That is very pleasant," agreed the girl. Scott took off his glasses, and knit his brows.

"In view of this advance," he continued, "and the fact that I am without ties, I have been very seriously considering the question—the vital question, I may say—relative to the wisdom of forming them at this juncture."

He paused for a response, turning his head to look at her.

"There are so many sides to such a question," Alice murmured.

"Exactly. And a thoughtful man, Miss Carne, can not afford to ignore them." He looked at her with added solemnity. "There is the money question——"

"There is always the money question," the girl said shortly. The remark jarred her like a false step, but Scott took her literally.

"Always. Your observation is perfectly just. Yet, permit me to observe"—he began to handle the subject professorially—"that this may be offset by the stability which is gained in the establishment of domestic relations. Danger may exist to one's ambition; but, on the other hand, I am convinced that few men can afford to omit all emotional development. Herbert Spencer, if you remember, is strong upon this point. One's duty to the community is definite."

He repeated this last sentence, feeling that he had been both delicate and firm, and had put the last item strongly. Moreover, as he heard himself talk, so calmly, so sensibly, upon the subject of all others on which most men were neither calm nor sensible, Scott could not but admire his own prodigious force of mind. He concluded: "In view of this, I can not help debating whether several years' delay, and an entire flexibility of mind on this subject, would not be the prudent course." He seemed to expect a direct answer, and, not receiving it, asked, "What is your opinion?"

"I have none. I never considered the question," replied she, working diligently upon her sketch. He regarded her attentively, and it began to dawn upon him that her heightened colour, her erect figure, the bronze curl that was stirred by the breeze and swept her neck, were giving him a distinct touch of pleasure which was new to him.

"It is true that the position at Columbia guarantees me a certain pecuniary return——" Here he paused, and had Alice been indifferent the threads were in her hand. A single glance at this point might have given another turn to affairs. But she was neither indifferent nor sophisticated enough to move her eyes.

"That is, after all, the chief question," she responded, without looking at him.

"Yes," Scott assented a little doubtfully, "although to most men a capital, say four or five thousand dollars at the least, would also be esteemed necessary."

When she heard these words Alice paused in her painting, laid her hand upon her easel, and looked westward with misty eyes. Here was Gilbert this very day absent on the errand which meant renunciation for them both, and which was the direct result of their young justice and generosity. But, oh, if she had known what it was going to cost! She rose suddenly, and turned toward her companion with a forced smile.

"The sun is getting too high," she declared; "I must stop." He gathered her things together deferentially, and carried her camp stool and colour box. They took the homeward path.

"You look tired, Miss Alice," he said with his kindly concern.

"There's such a glare to-day! It hurts my eyes," she replied, and covered them for an instant with her hand. The river returned the sunbeams like a sheet of polished metal. Noon seemed to bring with it a realization that the day was very hot, and the glitter of shining water seemed to pierce even closed eyelids. Clouds of white dust rose under their feet.

"You have not thought me intrusive or presuming, I trust?" Scott asked her as they turned into the shady lane.

He spoke with a sort of solemn *naïveté*, which made

her quite sincere in her reply, "Not at all; I was very glad."

"I can see, however, that you are tired," he told her, and Alice did not contradict him. He carried her paraphernalia up to the house, and left her with a deferential bow.

CHAPTER V

GILBERT AND MRS. LEIGHTON

THE early morning train which bore Gilbert to town was crowded with men on their way to business. Now and then, some one nodded to him and he lifted his hat in reply, but something intent and absorbed in his expression kept at arm's length the one or two who felt an impulse to join him. The boy was conscious of observing minutely all that passed, yet holding his mind entirely aloof. He bought a newspaper, and when he had taken his seat in the train, plunged eagerly into it; but nothing in its columns could divert his mind from what, during the next couple of hours, he was to see and do. His eyes wandered from the printed words to the men around him, each buried in his own newspaper, and he set to wondering at their likeness and diversity, at the sameness and difference in their lives. The dreadful landscape which the car window revealed to him in a whirling monotony—low, sandy, sordid, with its untidy frame houses and hideous factories—took a new significance to the lad under this pressure of new thoughts. Most of these fellow-travellers, he thought, took this trip twice daily during all their lives, covering a number of miles which would have stretched to some land of snow-topped mountains and splendid cathedrals. How came they to accept their daily bread upon such terms when he would not—when every mile in the journey stirred his pulses to revolt? The fire of this thought flickered out as he surveyed the dull faces,

and then he caught himself looking at them with a surprise born of his errand. This business he was set upon, with throbbing heart and the sensation of being brought into contact with things vital, was doubtless an old story to many of these. Most of them, he did not doubt, had taken part in some such drama, and had played, as his uncle had done, thus wantonly with the issues of life. The experience elated Gilbert very little with excitement or curiosity, though he was touched in a measure by the youthful thrill of being a part of what is happening in a tragic and whimsical world. He sat passive, weighed upon by the vivid recollection of his uncle's expressions, the varying passions—anger, humiliation, distaste, and mere blunt discomfort, without pity—which had passed over those kindly features during the interview. With this came back the keenest of his own sensations: the fact that no part of the jar and discordance he felt at the sordidness of the story and its elements—the deceived woman, the cast-off mistress, the child—had been shared by the author of it. The mere brutality of the thing was a shock to nineteen years, to whom hitherto the entire subject had come through literature and not through life, touched with immortal poetry perhaps, with a something passionate or heroic, as embodied in the figures of Lancelot or Tristram, or with pathos, as in Rosamond and La Vallière. But *this*, this almost commercial story, harsh and brutal, without emotion—it gave him an actual nausea. Imagination had coloured life for him, representing it brave, generous, ambitious, successful, full of interesting people and places and things, a race for success among noble opponents. He looked out of the car window now, and seemed to behold it, low, ugly, among ugly surroundings, without high thoughts, ideas, or hopes, lacking inner or outer beauty, while each man trampled his neighbour in the scramble for subsistence. Yet, with all this illusion

and delusion, and their exaggerated extremes, Gilbert was the better for a breath of the "rude common air."

Filled with new sensations, the journey seemed to occupy but a moment. He had to walk some distance to take the car for Mrs. Leighton's, and, though the sunshine was brilliant, it was as if he walked in a sort of shadowy twilight of thought. However, he had hardly entered the car when this mood of nervous unreality passed; he felt that his uncertain wavering had suddenly crystallized, become keen, clear, and hard. He felt master of himself and the task before him, and brought to bear on it not the tremulous sensibility of an hour back, but a mood of coolness, almost of indifference. He was no longer obliged to swallow frequently to keep his throat open.

The car clanged and rushed through the northern portion of the city, past miles of small brick houses, neat and monotonous. At a cross street Gilbert alighted, passed the corner saloon, and pulled a near-by bell. Alice and he had been there several times before. Tiny as it seemed, the two-story brick house, with five windows, was a lodging for several poor families, a grade above the tenement class.

After a long interval the door was opened by the occupant of the ground floor, clad in the costume which amounted to the uniform of the district—a calico Mother Hubbard wrapper, and curl papers. She grinned kindly in reply to Gilbert's question, and held the door wide so that he might pass up the narrow stair. The place reeked of cabbage, and Gilbert ran briskly up the two flights to escape it. He tapped at the room door, and, in reply to the words "Come in," entered, hat in hand. The room was small and close. At the first glance it seemed almost bare of furniture; at the second one noted a bed, bureau, chair, and, in a sort of alcove, a stove and rickety table holding, one or two poor cooking utensils. A spoon and frying pan

hung from pegs on the wall, in company with a string of onions and a worn bonnet and shawl. The rocking chair, drawn near to the window, was occupied by Mrs. Leighton herself. Upon Gilbert's entrance she looked up with a gleam of surprise and pleasure in her face. She was a very tall, well-made woman, with a figure which must once have been majestic, but now was merely gaunt. Her features were large and irregular; absence of all soft contours gave her face an eager intensity of expression, which was heightened by her faded gray eyes. It was hard to believe that she was only thirty-two. Her hair, which had originally been flaxen, had passed through several stages of dye and bleaching; there remained a hay-coloured wisp, with greenish patches. The woman was a pitiful figure enough, but there was about her personality a total absence of coarseness. She had a certain vague, inborn grace, and some unusual refinements. Her voice, for instance, was sweet, her manner quiet, her eye intelligent. The faded blue wrapper which she wore, clothed her long limbs like drapery; indeed she carried any garment with an air. Like certain actresses of the last century, risen from the dregs, Jane Leighton possessed (no one knew how) a manner. One would instinctively have set her down as fallen from a higher class. Gilbert never knew how much worse his experience might have been, for somewhere in Jane Leighton there was a subtle and unconscious difference from her class which, while the cause of all her troubles, yet had saved her from complete degradation. She had been restrained, forbidden by some exotic growth of scruple, some extraordinary rebellion of her nature, from fulfilling her destiny. The woman herself was far from understanding this; often questioned and beat against it when she saw others of her kind untouched, yet seemed unable to violate the integrity of her own soul. One who studies

these phenomena in human nature is not often justified in setting them down to morality; it would be inaccurate to describe Jane Leighton as "good" when goodness implies principle. She was simply in the power of a sensitiveness which does not by rights belong to her class at all; her life had set in one current and her nature in another, but while we regard it as salvation, it is by no means certain that she did not consider it misfortune.

"Why, it's Mr. Gilbert!" she said, and one of the qualities above noted caused her to remain seated while she extended the visitor her hand. "Dear me! It's a warm day, isn't it? Is Miss Alice well?"

"Very well," Gilbert replied. Mrs. Leighton dropped her work for a moment, to indicate the box where he might sit.

"It's fearful warm in here," she told him; "but the summer's come in earnest, ain't it? If you know any folks want sewing, Mr. Gilbert, will you remember me? When everything gets shut up it's hard to get work. I used to like the summer, but those were days when I could go to the seashore. I've staid at an elegant hotel at Atlantic City—right on the board-walk! I wisht I could take Val there; she'd grow fat in no time. It's hard on her, the hot weather is."

Her ideal of hostess led her to make conversation in this fashion, while the boy wondered how he was to begin his business. Would Mrs. Leighton take it as a matter of course if he spoke of it so? At all events he must make a start, and he did so, unconsciously interrupting her:

"My uncle has just been talking to me——"

Mrs. Leighton pressed her lips together and bent her head low over her sewing, but said nothing. Gilbert ran on in a sort of desperate impetuosity: "He had not known before that we—Alice and I—knew you. He isn't an unkind man—oh, indeed! He was inter-

ested—that is, he was anxious to hear how you were getting on. He felt badly, I think—he wanted to know——” Gilbert reached this point, when the recollection of his uncle’s real attitude in the matter choked him. He looked at the woman feverishly, and then, seeing no special sign of agitation in her face, took his own nervousness firmly in hand and steadied himself. “He feels responsible for Valentine,” he finished quietly. Mrs. Leighton seemed in no haste to answer. With her head on one side, she affected to measure the faded calico she was remodelling; she bit her thread, measured another, broke it, and threaded her needle with perfect composure. When she began to speak, it was without looking in Gilbert’s direction.

“Well,” she spoke slowly, intent on her work, “I told you about it long ago, Mr. Gilbert. You know all about it. There’s many who say I ought to managed better; got him to marry me—and I could have done it easy—or an allowance for the child. Most gentlemen does make allowances when there’s a child, and I’ve known plenty of ’em do it when there wasn’t. But I was all broke up when he told me to go—that’s the truth. I was angry, too”—she drew a quick breath—“for I’d staid by him true enough, and never a cent hinted at above what he give me! I didn’t see why he couldn’t marry me.”

“It was brutal!” Gilbert burst out, with a vehemence which sent a wave of heat all over him. She glanced up, surprised.

“Oh, my dear, you don’t understand,” said she; “and you’re young, too. It looks different then. It looked sort o’ different to me, too. When I first took up with him, I was awful happy. They were proud at home—mother thought for sure he’d marry me. He was just crazy about me, that man. And money—my, the clothes and things I had! But there was things I couldn’t bring myself to; and when he told me to go,

and started to give me a check, just as if I was a—no—I couldn't. I'd been honest with him, and loved him true. I wasn't going to take just money. Well, I did manage badly. I ought to have took something for Val."

Her voice had quivered, tense with excitement, in the middle of this speech, and relaxed to simplicity at its close. "There's women 'll do things I just *can't*," she said almost regretfully, "I'm sure I don't know why."

Ill assured, Gilbert stammered something. Conflicting feelings were pulling him to pieces. How masterful he had been before his uncle the day before! how uncertain and boyish now, before this woman!

"That's the reason we felt such a—respect for you," he got out. She let her faded eyes rest on his face for an instant, as if to penetrate the meaning of this outburst, the significance of which was lost on her.

"Ah, my dear, you're young," she said, as if that explained it. Then, harking back always to the incomprehensible fact, she argued: "It isn't as if I'd taken any one else. I just never could bring myself to that, though there's many would say it was the only sensible——"

"Oh, nobody could say so!" cried out Gilbert impetuously. There were seconds in which he felt a positive terror of the woman. "Just think how wrong——"

"Yes; but what are you to do, my dear? It's all very well for them that's got money. Now, there's Susie Quinn, she got a lot of money from her gentleman; she's doing fine now, and as decent——" Mrs. Leighton paused, at a loss for a simile sufficiently descriptive of her friend's rise in life. "If I'd only been able to bring myself to think of another, there's many as rich——"

"Oh, no, no!" the boy urged fiercely, half rising.

"But there's Val, you see." She spoke a trifle impatiently at his dulness. "What's to become of her? She can't pose in the summer. Them schools is shut up, and she's too thin. And the theatres don't take children so often as they did, and Val ain't good-looking, though she's smarter than the peck of them."

"Where is she?" Gilbert asked.

"I'll show you," said the mother. She folded her work and rose, crossed to a door, which she opened cautiously, peering into the crack. Then she beckoned Gilbert, and he obeyed. He stood looking over her shoulder in silence. A bare, unfurnished little inner room revealed itself, like a closet with one window. Directly beneath this, on the floor, sat, in her ragged petticoat, a white, thin child of nine or ten. She played with a dozen spools and pebbles ranged on the boards in front of her, manipulating them with her bony little hands. The size of these hands, and of the shoeless feet stretched out in front of her, seemed to indicate that she would one day be a tall woman. Even from where he stood Gilbert caught the flash of her eyes, which were set like lamps in the shrunken child face. Over her head and shoulders lay a superb thick mass of curls—no pale, indeterminate flaxen, but a splendid royal gold, every twist glistening—hair such as the mother's must once have been. When a curl fell across her eyes the child tossed it back impatiently, with a gesture full of grace. She half crooned, half chanted to herself some fragment of street song, and as they stood quietly listening the tune changed. Gilbert caught the words. "'How shall I,'" she sang, "'your true love know.'"

"She got that song at the theatre. There never was such a kid for learning!" explained the mother, softly closing the door. "Val 'll never have to be taught nothing—not her!" She turned somewhat in-

quiringly to Gilbert, and he was ready. The sight of the child had given him courage.

"My uncle wants to do something for you and Val," he began swiftly. "He hopes you'll take an allowance—that's what he sent me to say. You can educate Val. He thought you might like to go West to live——"

"He did, did he?"

"I've money for the first month in my pocket." Without further hesitation Gilbert drew the bills out and handed them to her. Mrs. Leighton took them and laid them aside. She unfolded the piece of paper wrapped round them curiously, and examined it on both sides. She turned it over and inspected the signature. Then, with an indescribable look at the boy, she put her two hands up before her face, and her breast began to heave. Gilbert swallowed hard. He was in dreadful perplexity, and tried to stammer out a word of comfort. But, in her paroxysm of sobs, she shook her head vehemently to and fro, and pointed to the door with the monosyllable "Val!"

Gilbert obeyed her, slipped into the next room, and joined the child in play on the floor. Val had scrambled to her feet at the noise of her mother's weeping, but Gilbert was a favourite playmate, and she was speedily diverted. By and by her shrieks of delighted laughter drowned out the smothered sobbing from the adjoining room. It was twenty minutes before Mrs. Leighton called Gilbert in again. The emotion had oddly heightened her resemblance to a tragic actress, but it had worn out the shock of feeling and recollection which had caused it.

"It was the sight of the writing," she told him. "Well, I'm real glad he done it. I'd like to thank him, for Val's sake."

"I'm afraid my uncle has gone away," Gilbert ventured, remembering his instructions on this point.

Mrs. Leighton flashed a quick glance at him. "Oh,

my dear, I know," she said with perfect simplicity. "He don't want to see me again, I know. Though I'm sure I never plagued him, nor done him no harm," she broke out, with a violent reaction following her insight.

Gilbert was silent. She went on more quietly, smoothing out the bills: "Lots of my friends have pitied me because my gentleman wasn't what you'd call a gentleman. Now I can show 'em he's as good as any. Then they'll stop telling me to try and do better next time."

"But you never would?" Gilbert said.

"No," she admitted, "I wouldn't. Seems as if I just *couldn't*. Funny, ain't it? Of course, I could in a minute if I *wanted to*," she made haste to add, "but I don't, you see. So I'm real glad he thought of it."

Gilbert rose and took his leave. The struggle which went on in her mind between her nature and her class was painfully unintelligible to the boy. He left the house, very thoughtful. Did constancy, delicacy of feeling, and maternal devotion really exist in the world linked to an apology? He found it hard to believe.

The journey homeward was warm and tiring. He was glad when he came in sight of his home, and saw Alice, in her white dress beckon him from where she sat in the thick shade. He approached her slowly, fanning himself with his hat.

"Well, was she glad?" asked Alice, as he threw himself down beside her.

"Ally, she cried! Wasn't it strange?"

"Poor woman, what will become of her?"

"I guess she'll go out West," Gilbert replied, and lay back listlessly.

"Did you see Val? How is she?"

"Pale and thin. It will do *her* good, anyhow. Oh, she is a clever imp! She'll do something fine some day, I'm sure." A pause fell.

"So—the end of *Great Expectations*!" said Gilbert half ironically. "Lucky, isn't it, that mother doesn't care?" He shifted his position, and rolled his head into his sister's lap.

"Oh, Ally!" he said, and his voice shook. The day's strain had been great, and the boy was worn out. Alice, too, had a lump in her throat. They had been so sure of doing right; but now that it was all over and the fine spirit had evaporated by which they had been buoyed up, there was time to realize what the giving up meant to youth and to ambition. "Five thousand dollars!" Gilbert repeated slowly. "For me, a nest egg to roll up and put on Hamlet with some day. For you, Ally, Paris and——"

"Don't, Gib. What's the use?"

"If only I could hate Uncle Godfrey as I did, but I can't."

"Think what it means to Val."

"Oh, yes. Ally, I promised her she should do Ophelia some day. Just think of that little thing!"

"Don't you see that this will be the means of giving her just such a chance? She's so clever!"

"She's a little genius! You remember her reciting?"

Alice nodded. Her interest was a trifle forced, but Gilbert did not notice it, so absorbed was he in the thoughts his recent interview had raised.

"Ally, it was all so strange, so strange! She was so touching, that woman; and then her way of looking at it all! It seemed to me so hideously brutal she should have been treated so; and the child—his own child, Ally—but to her it was almost a matter of course. She spoke of other women—I can't explain exactly what I mean." He hesitated, conscious his sister was not likely to understand. "It wasn't the—the immorality that made me so mad, it was the bargaining. And nobody seemed to care for anybody, as I

thought——” He left the sentence unfinished, shy, perhaps, on such a topic. What he felt was clear to him as to any young creature strong in feeling and instinct, but to whom morality is still abstract. “I believe I could act it,” he murmured, and thereupon mentally poured the whole scene as grist into his artistic mill. Brother and sister remained silent, till Alice roused herself to say, “There’s the postman, Gib. Will you get the letters?”

When Gilbert came back across the lawn it was at a run, waving a letter over his head. He handed it to his sister speechlessly. The envelope contained two checks, each for five thousand dollars, and enclosed the following note:

“MY DEAR NEPHEW AND NIECE: You are a pair of absurd, quixotic youngsters, but I hope you will not refuse this time to apply the enclosed to such purposes as your mother thinks best. Don’t fancy it means anything more, for I’m not going to give or leave you another cent. With such as you are it won’t last very long, I fancy—but you needn’t come to me when you get into difficulties. Keep your hands out of your relatives’ pies hereafter. I suspect I’m a fool to send this, but it’s due your colossal impertinence.

“Your aff. uncle,

“G. CARNE.”

CHAPTER VI

SCOTT DOES NOT

DICK, fingering a heap of papers, sat at his favourite post under the beech tree. Sunday calm hung over the bank, the river lay smooth and shining under a hot sun. A faint chime came over the fields, sweet and far away, and the boy listened dreamily. "Nothing like church bells when you don't have to go," he reflected.

Dick had just condemned to the river a number of verses which seemed to him unworthy the author of "Astarte of the Syrians." There were sonnets, odes, triolets, *ballades à double refrain*, now destined never to be read and commented on by an appreciative world. It depressed the poet to watch these scraps of paper dragged, like Ophelia, to a muddy death. "But one must be firm," he told himself, and he was firm.

Dick Cushing was odd looking at seventeen. His hair, light brown in colour, fine, and rebellious, shadowed his forehead, where the veins pulsed visibly. He had none of his mother's stolid placidity of expression, but his delicate features vibrated with sensitiveness. Dick's golden-brown eyes sparkled or grew dull as the nervous vitality rose and fell in him. The disproportionate breadth of forehead and brows to the pointed chin was one of the contradictory elements of his face. Cover mouth and chin, and the upper half of the head was that of a man grown, fiery, strong, imaginative; cover the upper half, and mouth and chin were those of a wayward, whimsical child. The boy's arms and legs

twisted into the oddest positions. His voice was pitched in an excitable treble. No wonder the more normal specimens of Bishopton boyhood would have little to do with him.

Alice and Gilbert were his chief companions.

The three spent charmed days and evenings lit with ambitious dreams. The library was all too small to satisfy their omnivorous appetites. Oh, that first dip into the ocean of literature, when one can give up wholly to the tingling current! Is anything like it in the world? They spent the winter evenings over Alice's studies, Dick's sonnets, Gilbert's ideas for the production of Hamlet. While the flames roared up the chimney and Dick roasted chestnuts dextrously in the hot ashes, the three tongues wagged all manner of serious absurdities, of ambitious nonsense. They were to storm the world for fame and fortune. Was not Dick to write the play in which Gilbert was to win his laurels?

"Because," Dick explained, "I understand you, Gib, better than any one else could."

The fragments read aloud by the fireside—to what discussions they gave rise, to what inexperienced, solemn, audacious criticism! This was the time when they were constantly stumbling upon new, unsuspected riches. Who could forget the day when Alice first brought home a volume of Ruskin, or that whereon Dick plunged for the first time into the Odes of Keats and forgot his dinner, or that evening when Gilbert, in a quivering voice, read to them the great scene in The Duchess of Malfi, and looked up with a thrill? Life had not as yet dulled the edge of these delights.

The three had inflexible opinions and unalterable convictions, of course. Dick, as we have seen, was strong upon principle, and convinced that it was advisable to avoid, by a little foresight, the mistakes of his predecessors in the matter of sentiment. As he was

by nature buoyant, sunny, and lyrical, Dante was, of course, his prototype, and the Inferno his model until some new discovery. Meanwhile, Dick was exceedingly austere and moral; he lamented the views of his god, Shelley.

Gilbert had theories on the treatment of Hamlet's character, a subject singularly neglected in literature. Alice, who had less imagination than the other two, was wholly guided by them, and perhaps this sympathetic audience of one had a good deal to do with the unusual freedom and fluency of their youthful ideas. She shared, to its fullest extent, the feeling which was the essence of their doings, that conscious cherishing and enjoyment of their own conversations from the dramatic point of view. This was the delight of their play, for it is the keynote of the situation that these three played at poet, actor, and artist as younger children play at school or house. In a wider and more sophisticated society, or under closer surveillance, our three would speedily have been stripped of their fancies, and seen their castles tumble. But as it chanced, they were singularly free and untrammelled by outside views. To Mrs. Cushing there was no significance in a book, and it was nobody's business what Alice and Gilbert read. This liberty, whereas it certainly did permit them access to a prodigious amount of trash, and much that was above their heads, had this advantage, that whereas nothing was forbidden, no fictitious importance was thereby assigned to anything, and they passed over as distasteful or unintelligible much that might else have savoured of the zest of prohibition.

The attitude of their native town toward these three young people was that of half-admiring, half-contemptuous curiosity. They were unlike other boys and girls, and their aspirations were regarded with distrust by conservative people, who expected young girls to marry and young men to go into their fathers' of-

fices. Bishopton was behind the times, and did not realize the mental activity of the younger generation. In how many poor rooms at this time, with how many privations, in what ugly and sordid surroundings were arts pursued, were ideals upheld! A consistent vigour, however ill directed, has ever been characteristic of the American, and in the rapidity of growth there lay a hope that the commercial spirit might speedily be left behind, and the national mind turn in the future to broader ideals. Such a spirit as governed our three young people was a justification of this hope, although, unfortunately, there was no one in Bishopton to observe it. They stood, as it were, in an eddy, not much favoured by public opinion, which, however, was shrewd enough to leave itself a loophole, lest it should one day have to be proud of them. Gilbert's intention to be an actor, Alice's studies in an art school, Dick's poetry when he should be playing baseball, were not popular. Among them Alice was the best liked; Gilbert was generally branded as "conceited," Dick as "wild," and neither of these adjectives, by the way, was unjust. But Alice was a "nice girl," and if she chose to stroll on the river banks with Randolph Scott of a Sunday morning, the worst criticism would only have pointed out the fact that she had better have gone to morning service.

The pair, Scott and Alice, came toward Dick, and smiled a greeting. In her white-and-blue frock the girl looked fresh and sweet; her face, too, was happy. Since the arrival of that check the future held something for her. Scott walked beside her, clothed uncomfortably, in full consciousness of the Sabbath. He halted opposite Dick, settling his eyeglasses as a preliminary to speech.

"You will lose your reputation, Mr. Scott," said the boy, looking up at him; "the bells stopped ringing fifteen minutes ago."

"My attendance is usually regular," was Scott's reply. "To-day I am going to afternoon service."

Dick smiled broadly. "Hadn't you better hurry?" he observed. "Church begins at four o'clock."

"Why should we?" Scott returned in surprise. "It is not yet twelve, and certainly Miss Carne and I intend to return before——"

"Let's see what you are writing, Dick," interposed Alice hurriedly. She flushed a little, too, for she was always more or less uncomfortable at the undercurrent of fun present when Dick or Gilbert talked to her friend.

"Oh, it's nothing much," Dick declared, but his vanity was alight. He selected and handed Alice a new sonnet of which he was proud. She read it with glowing pleasure in her face, and nodded her appreciation in silence.

"Perhaps I might be of assistance." Scott held out his hand for the sonnet, and Dick could hardly refuse. The man read it aloud slowly, with a distinct academic utterance, under which the poet writhed.

"Very creditable indeed," was his comment. Then he knit his brows, coughed, and went over the manuscript a second time.

"If you will allow me to make a suggestion, verse three should terminate with a colon; I don't quite understand the comma. The *a b a b* form is less correct than the *a b b a*, but one must not be hypercritical. Then, I notice here the term '*golden-crested dawn*'—did you mean '*crested*'?"

"Yes, I did," snapped Dick.

Scott raised his eyebrows. "I'd think over it, and substitute some clearer expression if I were you," said he, returning the sonnet. Dick grabbed it.

"Your suggestions are always valuable" (Dick was really a capital mimic) "and I'll give them strict attention, Mr. Scott. Meanwhile, if Alice doesn't mind has-

tening the awful moment, will you please walk on and leave me with the Muse?"

Alice threw him an indignant glance, and moved on. Scott, somewhat perplexed, followed, and Dick was left alone.

"Jackass!" he exclaimed vigorously, looking after the pair. Then he returned to his verses.

"To what did he refer?" Scott asked his companion.

"Oh, some nonsense or other," she replied evasively. "Dick will say anything, you know."

"A dangerous tendency." Scott shook his head gravely. "I fear young Cushing is greatly lacking in the proper spirit, Miss Alice. He has a great talent, but I doubt his future."

Alice remained silent, and the two walked on along the bank, in the shade of the great trees. The girl wondered how best she might convey the piece of good fortune which had befallen her, and which she so simply believed of vital importance to them both. She could not bring herself to speak of it outright. Their interviews so far had consisted in solemn perorations on his part, and silent efforts at adaptation on hers. Absorbed as she was by dreams on the subject, it had never occurred to Alice how much more open and at ease she was with her brother Gilbert. There was in her a streak of energetic, concentrated, dogged ambition, and this side Scott had never touched, had no part in, and no interest. The girl never knew how near she came to worse than that which actually befell.

"Miss Carne," Scott began, when they had left Dick some distance behind, "you must, of course, have realized that I had a purpose in asking you to walk with me this morning?"

"Why—I hadn't!" Alice faltered, and looked nervously about her.

"Of course, you know that I leave Bishopton in a

few days." He paused, for on a sudden he found it hard to say what he had planned. A slow red mounted in his cheeks. "I desired the opportunity of telling you that, after mature consideration—in short, I have decided to take your advice."

"My advice?" She looked up at him in surprise.

"Have you forgotten our conversation? I have not. I was never more impressed, Miss Alice, by your clear sense and firm judgment."

He took heart as the compliment unrolled itself with fluent accuracy of phrase. Alice did not acknowledge it, but waited with parted lips for what was coming next. As he glanced down upon her charming face Randolph Scott was very sorry for himself. He took off and polished his eyeglasses.

"It related to the wisdom of forming ties, such as marriage, for instance, under the circumstances," he began, disliking the task, yet proceeding with a determination for self-sacrifice. "Your advice exactly coincides with that of my friend Watrous, to whom I had written, giving a full account of my feelings. He has sent me a masterly analysis, which I received last night, and—it seems to me to be conclusive."

"I don't think I—quite understand," she said in a low voice.

"It is Watrous's opinion, as yours, and now my own," said poor Scott, with an effort and a pang that his conscientiousness could not overcome, "that I ought to leave the question open for some years at least, and enter into no arrangements which would tend to hamper a perfect flexibility of mind on the subject. Emotional complications particularly (Watrous was strong on this point) should be avoided, in view of my position. I feel sure that two such judgments as yours and his must be correct when in accord, and I feel I can not disregard them."

He drew a breath, and thought the better of his

own grasp of the situation. How few men, he reflected, would have the courage and dexterity to handle the subject in such a way that the listener would never suspect it had the slightest personal bearing!

Reply, for the moment, was impossible for Alice. She was honest, wholesome, warm-hearted, and the blow was direct and poignant. Coming, as it did, from forces of which she was ignorant and reasoning she did not understand, her bewilderment was as cruel as her disappointment. To her the whole affair had seemed so simple, the only possible difficulty so miraculously overcome. That "my friend Watrous" should have been called in was monstrous, and the conclusion shook her illusions to their foundation. She was woman enough to shut out these thoughts lest they should overcome her, and to face the present insistent moment with self-possession and pride. Older women may smile at the remembrance of these things and the pain they cost, but there is no one of them who would not save a girl such pain if she could. Alice suffered keenly, and so, in his own way, did Scott himself.

"May I write you occasionally?" he was saying, when Alice turned to him again.

"I should be delighted, but you will find me a poor correspondent," she replied quite steadily. Then an idea struck her, and she went on, "Also, I fear I shall be very busy preparing for a trip to Europe."

"You are going abroad? No one told me of it."

"It has only just been decided. Uncle Godfrey gave Gib and myself a very generous present of money. I've always wanted to study in Paris."

Scott said "Ah, indeed!" a note of surprise in his voice.

Alice looked straight ahead and walked fast, or she might have seen that his expression was regretful. He was very sorry she was going to Europe, an interrup-

tion to their friendship which might stand in the way of plans to be developed, say five years hence. Undoubtedly his present course had counted a good deal on five years hence.

“You will have a delightful time,” he said disappointedly. “You must take my good wishes.”

In the pause that followed Scott mentally tried to brace himself by drawing his next meeting with Watrous; the inquiries about “that matter,” his own strong, steadfast replies, revealing the self-sacrifice in its entirety without seeming to do so, and Watrous’s involuntary pause and glance of respectful admiration. As he forecast all this his step grew more precise. They talked about Paris and pictures for the rest of the walk.

“Let me urge upon you,” he advised her, “as you are to be alone, to be doubly careful of your associates.”

“Oh, as if associates mattered!” retorted the girl, irresistibly pushed to antagonism.

Scott looked grave. Revolving this remark in his mind after parting with her, he was inclined to feel better satisfied with himself. “Fixed principles” were an essential to his mind, and he had an innate distrust of the Continent and the arts. Nevertheless he spent a wakeful night or two, until he thoroughly realized the unusual character of his own wisdom. There is nothing more conducive to tranquility than to feel that one has handled an affair of sentiment, in which so many men, even the greatest, have blundered, with consistency and strength. The flattering congratulations of Watrous added the finishing touch, and Scott went up to Columbia in perfect serenity of mind.

CHAPTER VII

ALICE AND HER BROTHER

ALICE slipped into her place at the dinner table with brilliant eyes, and began to talk excitedly.

"Mother, May Jordan sails a month from to-morrow. Wouldn't that be a good opportunity for me to go too?"

"But I thought you hadn't decided that you wanted to go," cried Gilbert, laying down his knife and fork to stare at her. "I thought you said——"

"Never mind what I said. I've made up my mind *now*," Alice declared. She was eating with an ostentatious appetite, and would not meet her brother's eye.

"What do you think, mamma?"

"The money is yours, my dear." Mrs. Carne fanned herself gently. "How long do you propose to stay?"

"It would do no good to go for less than two or three years."

"Ally, so long!" Gilbert cried again.

"And where shall you arrange to live?" asked the mother, addressing Alice. The girl answered gaily:

"Oh, in some pension with another girl, I suppose. If not, I believe there's a special house now for students. Then, in the summer there's Barbizon or Touraine if one can afford it. May wrote me it was all made easy."

"Fancy thinking it pleasant!" Mrs. Carne said, and laughed a little. "Such a droll idea, this rushing off to live at haphazard."

Her tone was impersonal, and conveyed no sort of disapprobation, but it prompted her daughter to ask shyly:

"You don't mind my going?"

"Oh, not at all, dear child. Please yourself."

"I hoped—perhaps—wouldn't you like to come with me, mamma?"

Mrs. Carne's expression grew distant, and the fan waved slowly to and fro. "My dear Alice," she replied courteously, "I couldn't think of such a thing. I am very fond of Europe, but I fear I'm not equal to taking care of an artistic enthusiast in Paris—not at my age, dear child. But you may do as you like, of course."

The helpless weariness of Mrs. Carne's "dear child" is difficult to reproduce. Her speech was certainly a model of maternal acquiescence, yet some quality in it sent a rush of hot tears to Alice's eyes. She felt her brother's gaze upon her, and took a hasty drink of water.

"But, mamma," Gilbert ventured, "oughtn't we to think it over longer? Just think—next month—and to be gone three years! And Alice has never travelled by herself." He tried to shake his mother's indifference by his own sense of responsibility.

"My dear Gilbert," said Mrs. Carne more wearily still, "all that is quite unnecessary. She will do as she chooses, and I dare say she will be in proper hands. What sort of clothes do you think you will need, Alice?"

The conversation turned on Alice's outfit, and was carried on briskly between mother and daughter for the rest of the meal. Gilbert sat in silence, finding it hard to realize that this momentous change had been so quickly agreed upon. He watched his sister keenly, to see some indication of a reason for her sudden decision, but, though he noted signs of a covert agitation

in her, he was too much of a boy as yet to suspect its cause.

After dinner they went up to the studio where Dick joined them presently.

"Ally's going to Paris in a month, Dickie," Gilbert announced to him. Dick curled up on the floor and groaned:

"Just think of having such an uncle! Of all the luck! You going to Europe, and Gib to New York, and here I am stuck in this infernal old hole of a Bish-opton!" Words failed him, and he pulled his forelock viciously.

"Never mind, Dickie," said Alice consolingly. "You've got a start——"

"You mean Astarte," Gilbert interjected, and the poet rushed at him and pommeled him till he felt better. All three then climbed into the broad window seat overlooking the garden, above the tree branches, and sat there talking over the future.

"Save all you make," Alice begged Dick, "and you can come over then with Gib, if he gets a holiday."

"I sha'n't," said Gilbert; "its grind, grind with me for the next five years. Never mind, I'll——" He stopped, too shy to give his determination words.

"Now, let's be practical," said Dick, who loved the word, though he did not in the least understand it. "Say I publish a poem a month for two years—that's the *lowest* estimate, don't you think? At the same price, that will be two hundred and forty dollars. In two years' time, then, I'll publish a book of verses, and after *that* it will all be plain sailing." He drew a long breath; his eyes shone.

"Shall you try for the Salon, Alice?" he asked in tones of great importance.

"I suppose so," she returned listlessly.

"Don't put too low a price on your pictures," Dick warned her. "Better wait than throw them away."

"Do be careful who you go about with, Ally." This was the brother's admonition.

"Pooh! they're all Bohemians. Ally, when you go to the studios of those big chaps, let's hear about it."

"Ally, you'll write once a week, of course?"

"Send a portrait to the Salon first—you do them best."

"Do be careful of your money."

"Don't marry a Frenchman."

"Do, boys," Alice broke in pettishly, "do be quiet! I'm so tired!" They obeyed her for a time, and then Dick went away, leaving the brother and sister together in the window seat. It had grown late afternoon, the shadows were long in the grass, and a humming-bird flashed in and out of the honeysuckle. The pair were rather silent, and Alice had turned her face into the shadow. Gilbert touched her dress a little awkwardly.

"It's a big change, isn't it?" he ventured at last; "the beginning of all we've dreamed about."

She nodded in the shadow.

"It's awfully long, Ally—three whole years!"

His voice shook a little. There was a strained silence for a few minutes, then Alice turned suddenly, and threw her arms about her brother's neck. Her wet and burning cheek was pressed hard against his own.

"Oh, *don't*, Ally dear," he whispered, for the lump in his own throat had taken away his voice.

"Aren't you—sorry?" she sobbed out. What were dreams and ambitions against this first parting? Gilbert set his teeth, and the big tears rolled one after the other down upon Alice's brown curls.

CHAPTER VIII

INSTINCT AND INTELLECT

ONE item in her talk with Mrs. Carne weighed on the good-natured mind of Dick's mother. Her long intimacy with Alice and Gilbert made it natural that their affairs should rank next in importance to her own, and, under the circumstances, she would have been inclined to bestir herself actively in these same affairs had she not been restrained through fear of their mother's tongue.

But irony is an occult weapon to one of her nature, so she did no more than shake her head in private over her neighbour's singular indifference. She had heard with satisfaction the news of Scott's advance in life, and had looked out of her window on Sunday morning to see him and Alice talking to Dick. When they had walked away together, Mrs. Cushing smiled and nodded.

Judge, then, of her feelings when she heard the news of Alice's proposed departure, so hastily decided, and for a journey which seemed terrific to Mrs. Cushing! No consideration, no discussion with the minister, no prayer at church—these omissions seemed incredible. She could hardly be said to reason on the matter, but the instinct which belongs to kindly women sharpened her power of observation. She read a trouble in Alice's eye that was half familiar, and was fluttered by an emotion one half honest curiosity, the other as honest distress. To speak to

Mrs. Carne was, of course, impossible, even if it had been of any use. But Gilbert was accessible, and could be sounded; he had also some common sense. It was on this account therefore, that one day, as she sat on her piazza and saw him go by, she called him into the house.

The day was cloudy, and Gilbert was going fishing. He had his rod, and glanced dubiously down at his heavy rubber boots as he followed her into the parlour. But for once Mrs. Cushing ignored his unfitness to tread upon her sacred carpet. She flitted nervously about the room, picking up this or that, and Gilbert smiled to himself. He stood up patiently. "Well," said he at length, "evidently the trouble isn't in the yard fence, Mother Cushing." At this speech Mrs. Cushing took a seat as if suddenly tranquillized.

"Well," she repeated with a satisfied smile, "you're so quick, my dear boy! I just thought—but sit down."

Gilbert pointed to his boots. "I've only a minute. What's the matter?"

The intimation to hurry flustered Mrs. Cushing, but she was apt to be more coherent with Gilbert than with any one else. Fond as he was of her, yet her peculiarities bored him horribly, and in sheer self-defence he had cultivated a knack of keeping her to the subject in hand. He had long realized that over Dick and Dick's mother he possessed a very strong influence. His appreciation of their points of view, joined to a constant, steady, supple handling of their rather volatile minds, governed them continuously. The habit of consulting with Gilbert had grown on Mrs. Cushing, in proportion as her own boy developed his (to her) incomprehensible tendencies.

"I wanted to ask," she began, fluttering, "has your sister—has Alice ever mentioned—she might to you, you know—said anything to you, I mean—about Mr. Scott?"

"Why?" asked Gilbert.

"Of course, my dear boy, if I could speak to your mother—if she took these things a little differently——" she looked at him helplessly, and Gilbert instantly took up her idea.

"Oh, I know how mother is!" He nodded assent. "She has made it a sort of habit to push away from her and hold at arm's length anything that might disturb or upset her equilibrium. She's perfectly indifferent. I see you couldn't speak to her."

"My dear boy——" Mrs. Cushing spoke faintly, for at Gilbert's age such criticism of a parent seemed audacious and extraordinary. Yet his tone did not lack respect. It was, in truth, rather like his mother's.

"You think Alice and Scott are in love, then?" he pursued, going much too fast for Mrs. Cushing.

"Oh, I never said so to any one," she protested; "only, they walked together Sunday before he left, and I thought something— Then on Monday we heard Alice was going to Europe. I hadn't heard of it before, and it looks—and you know I'm as fond of Alice as if she were my own—and you too. I couldn't help wondering if—as you say your mother isn't interested, and girls so often make trouble for themselves over these things— Do you know if they quarrelled?"

This speech was a ray of light to Gilbert. His sister's nervousness, her preoccupation, her distress and sudden decision—he began to see a thread of consistency unite all these. Instinct told him that good-natured, muddled Mrs. Cushing must be stopped from further investigation at once. Gilbert did not know enough to be sorry for Alice, but he felt it his part to shield her affairs from inquiry.

"But, Mrs. Cushing," he answered somewhat eagerly, "Alice has talked of this trip for a long time. Her decision had been made for days, really. We kept it secret till she was sure. I know she's more

interested in it than in Mr. Scott. And he promised to write us; we parted the best of friends."

"Well, if she had decided to go before I knew anything——" Gilbert began to laugh. His curious histrionic instinct came to his aid, and Mrs. Cushing was led by it to doubt herself at once.

"What made you fancy Scott liked Alice? Why didn't you ask me before?"

"But I used to see him myself," she declared triumphantly, "every day go by here to join her when she was sketching."

"But I was there too," said Gilbert promptly. Mrs. Cushing, as he hoped, was instantly diverted from the main point.

"You were there?"

"Most of the time, certainly."

"Then, of course—but I thought—I must have been mistaken, that's all."

"Now, Mother Cushing!" said Gilbert playfully. He drew nearer, caught her eye, and held it with his own. "Just think what Alice would say! You won't put this idea into her head, will you? I'm afraid she'd scold us both if people got talking about her and Scott. It would be rather unpleasant for her now, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, indeed I——"

"You've always been so kind to us!" He slipped an affectionate arm around her shoulders. "Alice is dreadfully upset over the separation—just think, she goes for three years! I want you to cheer her up. You can do that so beautifully."

"Yes, the poor child—her only brother—it is hard—I will, of course——" And so one nail was successfully driven out by another in Mrs. Cushing's mind.

Gilbert did not leave her until the idea of Scott was supplanted by the picture of Alice, motherless in a foreign land, by which her sympathies were firmly

enlisted, and her kindliness more actively called into play.

Then the lad picked up his rod, stuffed his pockets with the cake she gave him, and set off. But his mood had changed. The conversation with his uncle had immensely increased his self-confidence; it had marked an epoch in his knowledge of himself and others. To-day he had put into practice what he had learned from it, and the result was a tingle of power.

"I can put things into her head or drive them out, just as I like," he thought with youthful arrogance. "Now if I can do that in the theatre! I swear I *will!*"

The artistic temperament more than any other is conscious of its stages of development. This summer when he touched his twentieth year was to Gilbert a platform, from which he was able to survey the ground covered, and, through floating mist, the path yet to climb. The airs of boyhood had given way to the bracing wind of the heights, and for the first time he saw the road he wished to take lead directly away from those about him. He felt great changes in his thought, in his outlook; with the new hold upon himself came a shedding of pleasant young delusions. Certain books, for instance, which he had hitherto thrown aside in favour of the more imaginative, began suddenly to speak to him. He read much that summer.

Alice's departure came in a month's time, and the parting between brother and sister was difficult.

"O Gib!" the girl had cried; "work hard, and so will I. When I come back we'll stay together always."

"I will, Ally; I will."

But Alice did not return at the end of three years. By that time circumstances had changed; she was making her own way, and Gilbert was at the darkest

period of his wandering actor's life. For ten years—the most important years of both their lives—her weekly letters were the only tangible evidence Gilbert had of his sister's existence. His to her, as will be seen, had greater value; they were at once his outlet and stimulus, and had all the impersonal weight of a journal. But undoubtedly from the date of his sister's sailing, she ceased to play a prominent part in his life.

Gilbert came to look back upon that summer as one of the most important he ever spent, so full was it of high-hearted excitement, of lofty determination. He studied furiously, making the most of every moment, and sharing all but his deepest thoughts with Dick. The younger boy had tasted the first drop from the wine cup of success and underwent a species of intoxication. Another acceptance followed that of Astarte of the Syrians.

"When we're famous," said Dick with sparkling eyes, "we'll change things, Gib. See if we don't!"

"But, Dickie, you must stick at it," Gilbert admonished him. "You'd a great deal rather lie here and dream about it than work. And we ought to work."

"Pooh! I have to feel the inspiration." Dick stretched luxuriously, rolling his cheek in the cool grass blades.

"You were going to work at your Greek this month, and you haven't done a line."

"Oh, shut up! You're a dig—I'm not. Just look at that sky, 'blood-boltered' from the sunset. What do you think of 'blood-boltered,' Gib? Macbeth—you know." He repeated the term in tones of satisfaction. "And look at the golden river below those fine feathery trees!" He drew a long breath of delight.

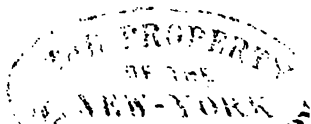
It was useless to try and get Dick to work at anything; and Gilbert began to find out for the first time that summer that it was useless to try and get him

to think as well. He shied at facts and reasons like a colt, and came to neglect more and more such topics as could not be coloured by the imagination. The confusing part of it to Gilbert's less fluent mind lay in the fact that Dick was often so very illuminative and so spontaneously. A phrase or sentence of his would come like a flash upon the elder boy, who perhaps had been beating his brain upon some problem which Dick merely touched with a passing flutter of his wing. It was this that gave Gilbert confidence in his talent, and a belief that certain needed qualities would sooner or later develop. All this fluency and colour and imagery must have its foundation in something like strength.

Mr. Godfrey Carne once or twice wrote his nephew good-humoured, amused admonitions and bits of cynical prophecy which made Gilbert wince.

"Wait till you've been a year or so on the boards, my boy, and you'll find that the pension business doesn't pay," he wrote; and again: "You're fair game for the nymphs of the theatre, with your romantic notions. But you wouldn't take my advice even if I gave it. Don't make too big a fool of yourself, but, for God's sake, get *some* experience of the world, and your old uncle will foot the bill, if it's only for revenge."

"There isn't going to be any bill," said Gilbert with set teeth. "Does he think I'm like himself?" The recollection of that gaunt woman with the dyed hair made the boy sick. He felt he could never forget it. In truth it had a strong effect upon his whole life, and served to intensify the austere streak in him. Some time afterward came a letter on cheap, highly-tinted paper, postmarked from a Western town. "We are getting on very nice now," it read. "I do gen. Utility in the stock co. here. Val is well and sends her love. She is growing that tall, and awful sharp. She



is a grate favrite here, and profesonals says she is bound to go East. She does Prince Arthur, little Eva and Cupid in the burlesque. She is grate as Eva, she would make you cry. She goes to skool some and she is a grate deal fater. We have friends here and are verry well. Do you come West? Val says don't forget Ophelia, and I guess she will someday.

"Your friend, JANE LEIGHTON."

Gilbert's reply to his uncle's letter was to send him Mrs. Leighton's. This proceeding apparently offended Mr. Carne, for he did not write his nephew again. The two never met. Two years later Godfrey Carne died suddenly in a Chicago hotel, and to Gilbert's surprise the estate was found barely sufficient to meet the dead man's obligations.

Mrs. Carne, with the persistent fancy of ill health just then settling upon her, chose to imagine that had Gilbert wished he might have been made his uncle's heir. It was in vain her son explained to her that Mr. Carne's fortune had vanished like a puff of smoke. She insisted that had Gilbert acted differently the money would have existed for him.

"Of course you and Alice did as you liked, and I hope you are satisfied," she remarked distantly. "But if you'd played your cards differently you might have been a rich man."

Gilbert suppressed the obvious answer, and remained silent. By and by Mrs. Carne laughed to herself, half scornfully, half indifferently.

"What is it, mother?" he asked gently.

"You amuse me, that's all," she replied coolly from her sofa. "You were so pleased by that criticism of your Romeo in the Something-or-other weekly, when you might be living like a gentleman."

"I enjoy my work—there's no harm in that," he replied quietly. She laughed again, as if amused.

"Oh, not the least in the world, my dear boy," she replied. "It's very praiseworthy and nice, I'm sure."

"Can't one be happy in congenial work like mine?" he asked as impersonally as possible, yet trying for sympathy.

"Oh, no doubt," she said in her manner of cold acquiescence, and lay back smiling to herself. There was a long pause, and then Gilbert said, turning toward her: "You have not been feeling so well lately, mamma. Don't you think Alice had better come home to look after you? I have to be away so much—and you might feel——"

She interrupted him with a faint displeasure tinged the decision of her voice. "My dear Gilbert, when I want Alice I'll send for her. Don't let's discuss it."

The young man's eye clouded; then he picked up his book and went on reading to himself.

CHAPTER IX

THE BUSY YEARS

It must not be supposed that Alice's letters to Gilbert resembled in the least these extracts from his to her. They were simply brief, pithy accounts of incessant work, with rare personal references. They never commented on what her brother told her of his work and ideas, and never, during all the years of the separation, gave expression to any of her own. Perhaps this very fact made his journal to her, as he called it, so free and full. Alice had at no time a ready pen, while Gilbert was fond of exercising his.

"After all, it's odd I write to you like this," he wrote, "for we are no longer very intimate. I make few friends; perhaps these letters take the place of them. I go on pouring them out across the ocean, and it does me good. Keep them all. It will be wholesome discipline for me to read them over some future day and mark the moods and steps in them. I've the great Goethe's example for my egoism. Like him, too, I confess (laugh if you like!) that hitherto I've found but few people more interesting than myself."

"I heard of Valentine to-day, from Blakeley, who joined the company at Albany last week. He seems an intelligent, discriminating sort of fellow, with ideas, in which he differs from the rest of our comrades. I like him, and we soon got talking. He has just come from the West, and when I mentioned Val's name his eyes lit up.

"'Do I know her!' he cried; 'my dear man, we'll all know her some day. She's the coming star, in my opinion.' I asked him questions, and heard that Mrs. Leighton had married the stage manager, a sort of Bowles, who is good to Val. Then I tried to find out what her training amounted to, holding her in my professional eye.

"'It has been fairly good, I guess,' Blakeley told me; 'old school—a-part-a-week kind. Of course she's had but little education. It's just plain, deuced talent, and that's all.'

"'She had it always,' said I. 'Is she attractive?'

"'She's a sort of kitten,' Blakeley laughed; 'but there's an individual devil in her, full-fledged, horns and tail growing. Still, they're decent people, and crazy about her, and the child's a good sort. They've got "the respect of the community" idea, and the mother's a sensible woman.'

"'You really think she may achieve something?'

"'Under our present beautiful system? How do I know? The syndicate may snap her up; and then she's lost artistically. But she has brains. Do you find, Carne, that the profession to-day is the resort of the intellectually maimed, halt, and blind?'

"'Blakeley is an eager chap and ambitious, but, to judge from his Mercutio last night, I should say his interpretations are too theoretical and fine spun. He asked me after the performance how I got the place as lead. I told him it came through Granger.

"'You're too haggard for Romeo,' was his criticism, 'but lord! you've actually thought about him, haven't you? Come to my arms!' We went home together, and talked late. Fellows like Blakeley do make a difference."

"I have just despatched the cable message, and am sending you full details. Our mother died painlessly

at three this morning. I can not help feeling relieved that the suddenness of the end made your return out of the question. She said little to me when I arrived, but complained bitterly that she was being 'bothered.' The doctor told me that she did not seem to grasp the truth, and I must tell her.

"'Mother,' I said, bending over her, 'do you understand—do you realize that—you are very ill?'

"She shifted the position of her head impatiently. 'Is there anything you want done?' I asked. She was very weak, but she answered me clearly, 'Only to be let alone a little, that's all.' Then after a pause, 'I shall be all right in a little while if they'll let me rest in peace.'

"After a time I tried again, 'Have you any message for Alice, mother?'

"She did not seem to hear, so I repeated the question. She said a little querulously, 'No, I wrote her last week,' and seemed to forget again. I bent over and kissed her on the cheek. 'Why, you odd child!' said she, and laughed a little. With the knowledge I had I couldn't help persisting, so I said, 'Is there nothing I can do, mother?' and she replied, 'Do as you like, of course,' quite in her old distant way. Very soon after she became unconscious, and died a few hours later.

"If peace consists in throttling all emotion and living in a vacuum, she certainly attained it. I'm not really callous, Ally, but oh, the vacancy which should be full of golden memories! Don't you feel it, too, a little? And I am like her; I know it. I must watch my tendency to bar out the concerns of others lest they should upset my equilibrium. One had better be a running stream than a cistern. I wonder if every artistic temperament is constantly stamping the ground to assure itself of a firm hold? is constantly forecasting and testing the future with its own

strength, as I seem to do? And I wonder if it is not a great danger, this constant self-assurance of independence, so that we hesitate to admit others close to our souls lest they should disturb its calm?"

"Yesterday I had a visit of condolence from Scott. The man is kind; but wholly in the grasp of dogmas that mean intellectual death. There's little sympathy between us, but let me repeat it—the man is kind. He is not overpopular at Columbia, I hear, and I noted traces of disappointment in him. I wish to God I were not so easily antagonized and hardened by his sort of talk! Often, Ally, I think of myself as untroubled, sharing everything, hoping for all good in all men, believing in it, and moving sunnily through the world. Then I look at myself and see—what? A nature impatient, upset by trifles, cowardly before a possibility of *ennui*, unsympathetic, hard, absorbed in self, intolerant of any but intellectual interests, and so quick to be personally aggrieved by the pettiness of things. I must give myself more to my art, to my friends, to my ideals, or I shall walk through life a more active exponent of the quality which governed our mother.

"To return to Scott. My profession, I could see, accounted to him for everything unorthodox in me. Nor does the fact that my life is austere as his own weigh with him for an instant. He is cutting grooves for his mind narrower and deeper every year, and I can not help feeling that there is a wrench in store for him some day. He asked very particularly after you."

"This morning, my dear sister, I've bad news. Business has been poor for some time, and last night we stranded here; needless to add, unpaid. So all my hopes for the season come to nothing. Here endeth the first lesson. I had trouble enough getting the

engagement, and had hoped for so much from it; and here I am poorer in pocket, and even in prospect, than three years ago. Bad financial management has been one cause, but I've no doubt my individual work suffered from the constant frost. Voice was weak; I could feel that my impression was unsympathetic, unfavourable. I can not win the hearts of these people, but am like a man muffled in a thick blanket, impeded and struggling. My conceptions seemed clear enough, but I lacked the emotional force to present them—and where were they? I talk to you about the necessity for intellect on the stage, but the basis of dramatic art is emotion, and I know it. Have I studied too much and cared too little, I wonder? Failure that I am! . . . To-day as I sit in this little tavern to write you, I'm wondering if Uncle Godfrey was not right, and I had better have been a clerk. Blakeley and I stick together. I never valued him more than I do now for his serene and cheerful spirit. I've written to Granger in New York, and until I hear must wait patiently. . . .

“No letter yet from Granger. I fear he may be in Europe. Meanwhile the situation grows pointed. Yesterday I offered my services to the one ‘impresario’ in the place, a fat Jew. I showed him my letter, play-bills, press notices, etc., but kept the fact of our actually desperate condition to myself. He was rude, and I longed to choke him, but as his people happened to be rehearsing a play I knew, he consented to try me for a night in it. Oddly enough, I felt stronger than I had done for weeks, clean cut and firm in every line. My manner, I suppose, showed self-confidence; but Mr. Hirsch was not impressed.

“‘That walkin’ through a part don’t go down here,’ he said roughly, when I asked him if he had any use for me. ‘No; we ain’t runnin’ that style’; and he didn’t even turn his head as I left the room. I tell

you I was never more mortified in my life; but my pride kept me from going back. I had rashly felt that I could hold the man, and this blunt failure staggered me. Have I learned really *nothing* these five years?"

"New York again, and a thick batch of stuff goes to you this time. In the West I hadn't the postage to waste on you, Miss Carne, and, moreover, did not wish you to hear about our vagabondage till it was a closed episode. We only spent three nights in the open when Blakeley's draft came. It was a tight squeeze; we were on our last pennies, and one night it poured bucketsful. We were utterly wretched. Poor Blakeley, I'm sorry to say, is here with me, ill with pneumonia. I'm sound as a nut, it didn't hurt me; but it will be some time before he is fit for work. Luckily for us both, Granger landed on the Teutonic the day after I got back, and put me right into a new production. Old Granger smiles and is not a bit discouraged. I'm sure I don't know why he believes in me, but he does."

"We have opened in New York at last, and it looks as though we shall stay through the season. The play, *A Cardinal Sin*, is an importation from Paris via London and *Mr.* (not *Mrs.*) Grundy. The papers prophesy a long run, and Granger is sufficiently pleased by the notices to promise me something better later on. I've a travesty of a part, unnatural, insincere, and it tempts to the most shrieking treatment. Yet the more I do, the more I feel convinced that I can take the public with me. I feel strong enough to drag them even in last night's wretched stuff. There's one decent scene which Granger has been telling me I pitch too low, and last night proved him wrong. The situation was impossible, but restraint pulled it through, gave it reality, shook the absurdity out of it.

Blakeley has a good part and does it well, though he is hardly fit as yet. He is with me in the big scene, and is always sympathetic. The rest acted the whole play at the top of their lungs.

"Meanwhile, my life is evenly divided between the different kinds of work. I've the name of a recluse—but who cares? The thing is worth doing with your whole intelligence as the great ones have proved, but these modern fools don't or won't see it. I've seen in myself lately a tendency to overcolour, to over-emphasize the imaginative in dealing with a scene, which needs counteraction by hard study. I swear I'll bring a trained intelligence to the stage if I bring nothing else, and I believe that it counts. The devil of this employment is that with a few tricks and a little imagination the majority of players produce apparently satisfactory results; so that it is a constant temptation to a laxity of artistic morals. You know I did Joseph Surface at a benefit in Boston two weeks ago? Well, Granger roared at me for burying myself in the Spectator and others, while on tour. But there is an eighteenth-century attitude in Joseph, reflected from the French, which I was determined to bring out. If I could get a chance at Iago! There are complexities for you, convolutions of deception and self-deception, intricate and delicate, and hard as stone or a fossil shell. Even Booth made him a mere villain. I see everywhere the man's superb unrestrained consciousness of power through intellectual superiority, and leading by way of mere justice to evil, revenge, and tragedy. To Iago things were not fixed, but relative. Has any one ever shown his exultation, when he sees the simpler man go frantic from the same passion of jealousy which he himself was conscious of mastering? Is not this the real satisfaction of his vengeance? If I ever act him it shall be as a ruthless intellect, towering above the others

and knowing it, at the expense of a total lack of emotion, kindness or delicacy of feeling."

"I send you herewith Dick's poems, with his compliments. A charming volume, isn't it? and more so inside even than out. I hope you will like them; to me they show much individuality and promise. Yesterday he came here, in high feather, with a big envelope of reviews.

"'Tell Alice,' said he, 'that I'm climbing Helicon and shall taste the Pierian spring. She must come home and paint my portrait; none other shall do it until Alice tries her hand.' He wants Mrs. Cushing to move to New York, but unless he gets a position they can hardly afford it. By the way, did you ever chance to meet their cousin, Philippa Cushing? They expect her home from Europe, and as she has an income of about a hundred thousand dollars a year dear Mother Cushing is laying her little plans. I go to see her often. She is so very sweet and kind.

"I'm very tired, Ally. I don't seem to accomplish much. Two girls passed me on Broadway to-day, and I heard one say, 'Look, there's Carne! Hasn't he a lovely nose?' There's modern criticism for you. It's all on about that plane. Granger puts on Romeo and Juliet next week, and I suppose the steady rehearsing has tired me out."

"You see that the tone of the press notices on the Romeo (which I enclose) is markedly favourable. I myself am much less easy to please, and find a good deal in it hard to swallow. Granger is an excellent fellow—I should be a beast of ingratitude if I forgot his kindnesses toward me—but he is devoid of taste. The grouping and detail were florid, undignified, execrable. Blakeley and I had at every moment to contend against the gabbling ignorance of the others.

Gordon's work pleased the audience and herself. I took the liberty to give her a few hints on such artistic canons as restraint and proportion, and as she seems to be a little afraid of me—why, the Lord knows—she took them without wincing. She is an intelligent girl, but saturated with the false tendencies, and warped by the false training of her environment. But then I'm a grumbler and a malcontent; always cavilling, never satisfied. It's hardly fair in me, for I've a good deal of influence with them all, and can do pretty much as I choose. But the details involved make this calling of mine a heart-breaking one at best. In my own work I had the satisfaction of feeling that the audience was gripped, interested. I am not at all suited to Romeo in appearance, and had a hard struggle against modernity of temperament to present him 'simple, sensuous, impassioned.' Dick helped me much in his vividness and colour, but I had to guard against giving my lover any of Dick's tremulous sensibility. I enjoyed the scenes with Friar Lawrence and the Apothecary best; and the poetry at the end I can never repeat without a natural quiver of the voice. The duel scene was a failure—overstrained—and *all* the applause due to Blakeley, though if I got any you may be sure it was because I shrieked an octave higher.

"The old stumbling-block—voice—is in my way again, and I must go back to the training I hoped was over. No, Ally, you are wrong in suggesting in your last letter that my writing of incessant work covers any other interests. I've some friends and many acquaintances, but nothing that promises you a sister-in-law. I'm far more eager to find a leading woman! The stage does throw difficulties in the way of the normal domestic life; you can't get over the division of interests however hard you try. Of course this is artificial and bad; but the exceptions (and

there are plenty) are not those with temperaments and ambitions like my own. The mere excitement is so unbalancing, adding physical strain to the nervous one of artistic creation. And I'm too high strung to be properly adaptable, and at once too sensitive and too impersonal for such a relation. Yet, Ally (it's funny to write you this), my desire to help grows more emphatic daily. I can hardly refrain from giving the touch of guidance here and there to the ignorant lives around me. And I do so with growing confidence in the power of understanding kindness. O Ally, this mere *kindness*, what a force it is! How men like Granger and women like Mother Cushing draw you to them by its use! When your brother Gib is too fagged, or too self-absorbed to be of the service he might be, and (for I won't depreciate myself) *can* be when he tries. I seem to write of little but the disadvantages of my life, yet realize more and more how deeply I love it, how the power it gives one over others' minds is a constant fascination. It is the reason why I believe that the deeper I cut my die, the clearer will be the impression on the hot metal."

"It really seems as though the day when I may head my own company is not so far off. Looking back over the last eight years I see a steady advance; even when I fell back, it was preparatory to a longer leap. The two years on the road, for instance (how I hated them and how dark the future seemed!), brought me thorough training, technical variety, and valuable contact with numberless audiences. Last night Granger and I thoroughly canvassed the starring project. He is not only interested, but thinks my hold on the public quite strong enough. He showed me notices from which I quote, to tell you exactly what I mean.

"We shall expect much from Mr. Carne in future. His last two appearances in New York have served to

raise him definitely above the position of *jeune premier*. He has youth, physique, intelligence, combined with an oddly attractive and rather picturesque grace and fire. His hold on the public seems to be unquestioned; which is the stranger at this time as we notice in this young man tokens of that unusual quality—*mind*. He is, we venture to say, the only well-known player at present who does not only act, but also *impersonates*. Genius is a large word, but we use it advisedly when we speak of certain (not all) scenes of Mr. Carne's Romeo. It possessed a rare grace, the Shakespearian spirit. We desire, in friendly wise, to remind this young player of what we deem the responsibilities of his talent. Such a man, if his strength continues to develop, might revive the classic traditions and give New York a company of players worthy intellectually of an important metropolis.'

"Such straws, Ally, show which way the wind blows. They fix my determination to be my own manager and form an organization capable of worthy work. Of this Granger is doubtful."

"Undoubtedly my plans are checked at the outset by the difficulty of finding the sort of leading woman I want. Actors are a flaccid lot, but actresses——! Seriously, I don't know a single one capable of doing the work I want done. There are plenty of attractive women, and a few intelligent ones. I know one or two with fine dramatic instinct, capable of handling any situation. But I've had ten years' thorough, incessant training, and what I want is a comrade with *mind*. The stage calls for this so little nowadays, superseding it with personal charm and the dramatic instinct; and it has become, moreover, a calling where bread can be earned on such very agreeable terms, so no wonder if I have a long search. My egoism gives me this advantage, that for my own sake I sha'n't be

content with mediocrity. My mind runs on Valentine. I heard that they had moved to San Francisco, and she is doing better and better. Ten to one she's vain, illiterate, foolish—and yet, if she should be intelligent—I've a feeling we could work together. Scott is going on a Western trip, and he is always pleased with his own critical faculty. I'll get him to see her and write his impressions. I want a woman under thirty, unmarried, attractive (if not handsome), picturesque; fluent, dramatic, intense, cultivated, graceful, sensitive, and furiously ambitious; a hard student, a broad character, an untiring worker, and ever ready withal to sacrifice her costume to fitness. In one word—a paragon.

“‘And her hair shall be of what colour it please God!’”

“Dick's cousin, Miss Cushing, arrived last week. I have not met her yet. He took her to see the Romeo, I believe, but I knew nothing of it. The presence of so much money in the family is a novelty to dear Mother Cushing, and she evidently enjoys it. The girl, from what I hear, is herself attractive, and Dick has become her intimate friend at once. I am invited to spend my holiday with them at a seaside cottage they have taken, and shall probably accept.”

“Last week I took a set of rooms, which I shall try to make some sort of home. The thought is novel and delightful. I wish you could see it: it's a cheerful little place, with some of the furniture from home and my books and pictures. Dick comes often; we have pipes and beer together, and he walks the floor and makes poetry. Blakeley comes too, and I had a call from Scott just before he left for the West. I asked him to look up Valentine in San Francisco.

“‘This is not a very sympathetic mission,’ he

remarked, 'but I will aid you to the best of my ability. Do I understand that you wish my criticism to make especial reference to the *intelligence* of Miss Leighton's stage performance?'

"I told him about what I wanted, and to-day I got a letter. I won't inflict the whole on you, but just enough to show you its value to me.

"I had the pleasure of seeing Miss Leighton in modern comedy last evening. The performance throughout was excellent. I saw at once that she was a very unusual young woman; and my friends tell me she has a lovely disposition. Her mother (of whom you spoke) is dead; but her stepfather seems an excellent man, and gives her ample protection in the uncertainties of her profession. She has pleasing and attractive manners. I had the honour of an introduction after the play, and enjoyed some conversation with her. She is entirely different from any woman I have ever met. My friends here agree with me in thinking her too refined for the stage, although very talented when on it. There is something about her—a vivacity and originality which I am sure you could not fail to like and admire.'

"Observe, my dear Alice, how the professor fulfils his promise! Consider our conversation as I reported it—and then consider the above! He winds up by saying that he will send me 'further observations on her art at some later period.' If it were anybody but Scott I would call your attention to one infallible sentence in the above—can you find it?"

BOOK SECOND

CHAPTER X

PHILIPPA

THE day when she went with her son to meet the Majestic was an important one for Mrs. Cushing. She vaguely felt that the arrival of her young cousin opened a new era in the family history; and while she was the least calculating of individuals, yet, acted on by this thought, she strove to gather her scattered personality into one strong and consistent effort to win the newcomer.

"I hope she will like us," she kept repeating nervously, as they drove to the dock. "She is so lonely, Dick, and the strange country—— It would be a pity if she should not take to us—and you're her only cousin! But then, of course, she will like you. Only, her being so long away—and Germany—her own relatives ought to come first, but then——" and Mrs. Cushing sighed and shook her head profoundly. It fell out that the good lady's tremblingly planned efforts to make a good impression were entirely forgotten when her eyes rested for the first time on the tall, slender girl who came toward her shyly, but without hesitation. All the warmth and motherliness of her kindly nature came into play and tinged her greeting with a simplicity and sincerity which went far toward accomplishing her end in a different way.

"Philippa, my dear!" she exclaimed and kissed

the girl, her round face beaming with pure loving-kindness. "Why, how tall you are—I had no idea! Was it a smooth voyage? Poor child! This is Dick, dear, your cousin Dick—your only first cousin. Dear Philippa!" and she kissed the young cheek again.

The girl looked up at the tall young man, her dark eyes meeting his brown ones, and a little spark of light passed between them at the glance, as if youth peeped out in it. She gave him her hand with a smile, as if she had known him before, and turned her attention to his mother. Mrs. Cushing still kept hold of the girl's hand, pressing it between her two plump, black-gloved ones and squeezing it gently, as if to convey by this means the warmth of her feelings.

"Did you leave them well?" she asked Philippa anxiously, feeling this to be a necessary inquiry, although, as she told Dick, she never could remember the names of "those foreign people she stayed with over there."

"You mean Professor and Mrs. Löfler? Oh, very well," replied Philippa; "that is, when I left them, which is more than a week ago." She had a charming voice, low-pitched and rather English in timbre. "Deep and velvet like her eyes," thought Dick as he listened.

"Poor dear child!" Mrs. Cushing could not rid her mind of the idea that condolences were in order somewhere. The emotion which the meeting had raised in her made her uncertain as to its proper outlet; and she felt vaguely that she ought to condole with the girl upon some element in the situation—the separation from her German friends, perhaps, or the death of her parents when she was a baby. However, Philippa had a little manner, poised, reserved, possibly touched with diffidence, which gave her aunt no aid; so she confined herself to a series of little pitying and affectionate ejaculations.

"We are so glad to come to know you at last!" Mrs. Cushing ran on, as they moved over toward the cabstand, followed by a stolid German maid. "You must not treat us as strangers, my dear. We are your own people, you know. Dick is your first cousin; and you must call me aunt." And Philippa replied, "Indeed, I shall be very glad," with an accent of sincerity, showing how far Mrs. Cushing's simplicity had pleased her. "You are so alone, you know!" her aunt exclaimed, as an explanation.

Philippa Cushing's position was in truth singularly lonely for a girl of large wealth. By the terms of her father's will she had been left to the guardianship of his friend, a German professor. During her minority her life had been passed largely under the roof of her guardian and his English wife; a girlhood quiet, exceedingly studious, and simple to the verge of austerity. That it was not a wholly foreign education was due to the fact that she had been purposely brought into contact with Americans, and had visited her own country at intervals. This final return, on her coming of age, was for the purpose of taking over the charge of her own affairs. She was now her own mistress, the mistress of a large fortune, and in this position of sudden responsibility the friendship of her aunt and cousin was a bond which she caught at eagerly. The visit to Bishopton, which she paid them on landing, served to cement it rapidly. They were charmed with her, as she with them. Her aunt's affection had won her heart at once; and Dick was simply the first intimate companion near her own age whom she had ever had. In six weeks they had become such friends that Philippa's invitation to spend the summer was accepted by her aunt and Dick as a matter-of-course. A cottage was rented on the Maine coast, and the girl was so happy in this arrangement which gave her home and family, that it seemed likely

to grow permanent. In the opinion of Miss Cushing's legal adviser, this was not at all to be desired; but, after all, Miss Cushing had no one to please but herself. If the gentleman who had part charge of the Cushing millions groaned to his wife in private over "that scapegrace of a poetical cousin" who loomed so distinctly upon the horizon, he certainly never breathed a syllable of disapprobation to his young client herself.

"And after all," said the judicious Mr. Bentley, "there can be no possible objection to her having her aunt with her—alone as she is. Insane will—Cushing's—there ought to have been a trust. What's to prevent this child with philanthropic ideals and her featherhead of a cousin, from making ducks and drakes of the money?" Meanwhile, Miss Cushing, untroubled by future considerations, was enjoying her holiday to the utmost. She enjoyed it so much that, although she had extended an invitation to Gilbert Carne in Dick's name, she was distinctly sorry when the time arrived for his visit. It seemed like the breaking up of their privacy and comfort.

"I'm sure," she told Dick, "that I shall hate him."

Dick laughed. "Oh, no, you won't," he said persuasively. "Please don't, for my sake."

"How am I possibly to help it?" His cousin stood, tapping her foot on the piazza step to emphasize her conviction. When Dick's voice took on that coaxing inflection she slipped into a sitting position and looked up at him. "How can you expect me to like him," she repeated, "when he all but breathes for you? So condescending! Why, that letter treats you as if you were a child—it simply infuriates me."

Her colour was heightened and scorn rang in her voice. Dick only laughed lightly once more. He held an open letter in his hand, and the breeze fluttered its pages. It never crossed his mind that Gilbert did not

intend these words, written in the interests of deep and intimate friendship, to be shown a third person. And it crossed Philippa's mind as little that the young man who sat on the railing, and bent his delicate, smiling face down toward her, had read them to her for no other reason than that she should think and say exactly what she did think and say. He liked to hear her vehement protest, and was content she should think Gilbert's ascendancy over him arose merely from his own affectionate toleration.

"You admired him enough in town," he pursued teasingly. "You talked about the Romeo till I began to be jealous."

"Oh, on the stage—yes." Philippa gave a foreign little shrug. "Of course he has talent—more than talent. But that doesn't mean I shall like him in private life."

"But you will. Gib is so affectionate."

"Affectionate! After that chilly letter? My cousin, you are too good; you see all your friends through rose-coloured glasses."

Now the fact that Dick had not shown his cousin more than a few sentences in the letter discussed took no sweetness from this flattery. He threw it off with an "Oh, nonsense!" but it was to him like a delicious odour, nevertheless. He returned to the letter and reread in silence: "You know that you and Alice are more to me than any others in the world. You know that nothing but the fact of our long, close friendship would permit me the liberty of these suggestions. I know that you will not think my plain-dealing interference——"

"Just the same—Gib is affectionate," he declared abruptly.

Philippa's eyes said plainly, "It is your own warm heart which makes you think so," and, meeting his cousin's gaze, Dick, who had been on the point of read-

ing aloud this very paragraph, changed his mind, and smiled again. After all, he could tell her to like Gilbert, and it came to the same thing in the end.

"I don't see why you want me to go meet him all by myself," pursued Philippa, going back to the subject which had started their discussion, and speaking a little reproachfully. "He's your friend—I asked him for you. I didn't want him, goodness knows!"

With his head on one side Dick scrutinized her downcast face. Then, with a little laugh, he slipped from the railing to the step beside her and tried to make her look at him. Dick had the naïve audacity of a little child; he was perfectly charming.

"Please, little cousin," he coaxed softly. His eyes, not six inches from her own, were full of an irresistible dancing light, but Philippa would not look.

"But why won't you come with me?" she protested.

"I've something important to do, Phil—really."

"Important! What?"

"The Oracle editor wants a poem. I haven't heard a single flutter of the Muse's wings. If you knew, you'd see I must go out alone on the mountain, to look over the sweep and splendour of sea, and get the wind to blow my verses into me. And then I want you to make friends with Gib naturally and easily, without me."

"But why, Dick?" She turned and met his eyes.

Dick had really no reason, except that he wanted to do something else.

"Because I want my two dearest friends to like each other," he said, and rubbed his forehead half caressingly, like a kitten, in the soft silken folds of Philippa's sash. He glanced up sidewise at her with a droll look and laughed merrily, and Philippa laughed too. There was a fascination for the girl in the bril-

liant, winning childishness, the high spirits and simplicity of this extraordinary cousin of hers.

"Gilbert is a splendid fellow." Dick's tone changed to decision and he straightened up. "You must like him. And he's successful—much better worth making a friend of than a wretched scamp of a versifier, blown on by every wind, who can't earn enough to pay his own debts."

He sprang up as he spoke, with a sudden frown, and began to walk up and down thoughtfully. He was conscious of Philippa's gaze.

"Is it—much of a difficulty?" she whispered delicately.

"What does talent count?" Dick swung a scornful arm; "or high aims, or love of beauty, in this world of mere dollars and—nonsense? God knows my tastes are simple enough! I don't want much, but what I swear I will not do, Phil," he turned his flashing, frowning glance on her, "is to grind out my verse for bread!" An old revolt was in him as he spoke. Dick was fully aware that his tender, delicate, light-winged Pegasus was not capable of being harnessed to the plough, and he resisted all attempts of that character with a passionate dread.

The girl sat silent, watching him with a plain anxiety of tenderness in her face.

"Dick?"

"Yes, Phil."

"You will let me take charge of this, won't you?"

"Why do you bother over me?" he replied with a gesture; "I'm not worth it, dear."

"Let me be judge of that." Her eyes were deep and earnest, and her thought was, "I must not hurt his pride."

"It's a simple case of justice," she said. She rose and, drawing nearer, fell into step with him up and down the gravel. "I have all this money—thousands

more than I need. Dick, it's going to be a curse unless I can do as I wish with it. In your world there shouldn't be any false pride, surely. If your mind is set at rest, you will write good verses, and in this way that old money of mine will do some good for the world. Is not this right?" she finished triumphantly, yet very sweetly.

"But I can't do anything in return," cried Dick, with a pang.

"Oh, yes, you do," said Philippa; "you *are*! I mean—I never was at home till I came here, and aunt took care of me. Over there I never had an intimate friend. Oh, you've done lots for me, Dick, by just *living*. I'm repaid." In which statement Philippa was exactly right.

"O Phil, you angel!" cried he at this, and carried her outstretched hand to his lips. Then, glancing up, saw perhaps something in her face that caused an answering flash in his own. With the sudden leap of flame in his eyes, a something irresistible and exultant, he would have taken Philippa into his arms, but she was too quick. She drew away with a blush of rebuke, and ran into the house.

Dick was left standing in the sunshine. The blood raced in his veins. He drew a deep breath, and stretched his arms. "Now for the Oracle poem!" he said aloud, and when his cousin came out an hour later he was nowhere to be found.

There was a shade of trouble on Miss Cushing's face as she stood on the step, putting on her gloves. She was honest and sincere, with many high aims; and this is much, even if her mind had the rigidity of inexperience and was apt to express itself too much in the terms "I think" and "I believe." A very simple habit of life and a studious turn of mind had given her a seriousness beyond her years, although perhaps a more normal girlhood in the way of pleasure would have

been a better preparation for the American life. One liked the girl so much, for her charm, her conscientiousness, her generosity of affection, that one would rather have seen her sense of responsibility tried by experience. She had a little idea of her own dignity, but it was only attractive and girlish, not pedantic nor stiff. At present her mind was filled with important, yet not wholly agreeable thoughts. Dick had gone just a trifle too far this time, and the moment had come to call a halt. In the silence of her own room she had done some thinking, and with her thoughts had come a sweeping realization of the seriousness of the relation to which the future seemed to point. She was wholly fascinated by this Aurora Borealis of a man, but there was also a certain shrinking of herself, there were many doubts. She was not ready, but felt she must wait, and watch and keep her head—of the last clause she was certain.

These thoughts occupied her mind as she drove to the wharf, and perhaps it was not sorry to be so occupied. Honestly perplexed though it may be, the girlish mind never regrets these problems; they are part of the outfit of womanhood, and to have them presented for the first time is a sort of feminine equivalent to the assumption of the *toga virilis*. Philippa was not self-conscious, but—the months of Dresden schooling seemed very far away, and—Was life altogether pleasant or rather perplexing?

Whichever it might be, these important matters in their reiterated seriousness had almost driven the fact of Gilbert Carne out of her head. A steamboat whistle summoned him back to her consciousness, and she touched the pony with the whip so that he started briskly down the mountain road. She began to be faintly curious too. Another young man, even though, as she had told herself, "We are bound to be antagonistic," was, after all, *another young man*.

The road which Philippa took pitched steeply down the mountain spur, past several gabled summer cottages which overlooked the cuplike bay. Colour was everywhere: in the varying azures of sky and sea, the brilliant greens of fir and alder, the masses of poppies nodding scarlet in the sunshine, the flaming of nasturtium blooms up the stone wall. To the girl's eyes, accustomed to the mists and mellow atmosphere of the Older World, there was an exhilaration in this land of glittering distinctness, of bright, clear colour, of unsubdued outlines. She drew in the winelike air with new delight every morning, and each view gave her something new to admire in the group of quaint cottages, perched irregularly, tier above tier, on the slope which ran down to cliffs washed by the sea. Beyond were mountains, purple and golden, and before her was the steamer just in the act of drawing up to the landing place.

She pulled up on the roadway above the wharf, and looked for her guest among the crowd of brightly dressed arrivals. In a moment she saw him coming, and she smiled and nodded encouragement. There was little about the man that suggested his profession, save, perhaps, that he wore his thick black hair a trifle longer than was customary. Miss Cushing had seen once before the face he turned toward her, the thin, aquiline, hollow-cheeked face, the firm mouth, the long jaw. His eyebrows made a level black band across his forehead, beneath which the eyes smouldered. In repose, the mouth was quiet with a touch of hardness, a suggestion of self-restraint; under the light of expression, the whole face leaped into a keen eagerness and intensity, or was played upon by a certain gentle, satiric humour. The young man moved among the crowd with an undoubted air of domination. When he met her, she was surprised to find his manner simple almost to boyishness; at least, she termed simplicity

what was really a habit of self-effacement, which had come from his constant desire to explore the other person.

In his turn Gilbert scrutinized Dick's cousin. She struck him as handsome, although the irregularity of her features made it at first hard to say why he found her so. A certain grace and daintiness and air of finish pervaded her whole personality; not vaguely, as in the case of many, but strong enough to make these adjectives the first to come into one's mind. There was something about her that was delicately foreign, although not in the usual sense of the word, for she lacked vivacity, and her dress was absolutely simple. It caught his eye pleasantly with its stiff, crisp folds of white duck, the waist of a soft rose-colour, and the plainly-trimmed sailor hat. She was dark as Carne himself, but with warm, ripe colouring and eyes of a clear gray. At first her manner struck him as unusually poised and finished; he soon found, however, that this was a very thin veneer covering a lack of self-confidence.

Gilbert also had wondered once or twice how much the new cousin's presence was going to affect the pleasure of his visit. That he was at once strongly attracted himself, gave him an immediate misgiving in regard to Dick's attitude. So these two young people meeting one another with every courtesy, were yet mutually doubtful as they exchanged greetings.

"I know you're wondering where Dick is," Miss Cushing said, as Carne climbed on to the seat beside her, "and I've no excuses for him. He had simply a whim that we should make friends by ourselves."

"You mean he wanted us to get over the preliminaries so that he could talk at his ease?" Carne asked.

She looked at him with a swift, charming smile.

"You're very quick, Mr. Carne."

"But then I know Dick, Miss Cushing."

"What a tone of confidence!" Philippa's reply was playful, but she raised her eyebrows. She had a sense of self-satisfaction at his remark, which she took to prove the accuracy of her *à priori* judgment of him. Nothing is so flattering as to have people speak the lines we have mentally assigned to them.

"You see, Dick and I have been intimate all our lives."

"Are you sure that leads to knowledge? I believe one can live side by side with people for years, and yet know nothing of them."

Weariness settled upon Gilbert at this remark. "Perhaps you can," said he, with latent sarcasm, "but I don't think that's likely to happen with me."

A touch of egotism, such as this speech, was too apt to crop out and nullify the effect of his strength. Here was something more, then, for Philippa to seize upon. She began to regard herself as a judge of character. Her data had been half a page of a letter and the effervescence of Dick's imagination, and on these and on two remarks her theory of Carne rose to a structure large enough to contain anything he might say or do.

"I've known Dick only three months," she said good-humouredly, "and I'm wondering if at bottom I don't know him better than you do."

"Very possibly, Miss Cushing."

"Sympathy is the chief thing, after all, isn't it?"

"It's a very great thing, certainly," he quickly assented. Miss Cushing's head was full of Dick; she spread her wings.

"I know you agree with me," she said, turning toward him, "that he is a real genius." Gilbert returned her glance with a sense of amused helplessness. What a glowing face she had, but how his mind rose against her!

"That's not a word I use often," said he, "but

undoubtedly Dick has lyrical talent and colour—and delicacy, if you like.”

“If I like! How very odd you are! Surely, those will make his success.”

“Yes, they may.” Mr. Carne’s replies were so inflexibly temperate that she promptly attached derogatory meanings to them. She did not at all realize that her sweeping statements alone drove him to the other side.

“Well, what quality of genius do you think Dick lacks?” she inquired triumphantly.

“Oh, I don’t know. How about that ‘infinite capacity for taking pains’ you’ve read of?”

Philippa plunged ahead. “You deny that Dick has such capacity?”

“Lord, what kangaroo leaps!” Gilbert thought. Then aloud: “Oh, not at all. There I trust to your superior knowledge. Has he?”

“I think so,” she began, but innate honesty caused her to falter, “that is—I hope so.”

“So do I. We’re both just a little uncertain, are we not?” Philippa looked at him. There was the faintest shadow of a smile in his eyes, but they were perfectly courteous. She became conscious that she had said more than she meant, and was not pleased. Of course, Mr. Carne’s opinion didn’t matter a pin to her on *any* subject; still, she wondered what he really did think. It was evidently not easy to find out. She stole another glance at him, but he was looking about him with manifest pleasure.

“How exquisite it all is,” he said to her, “this crisp air, and these pines, and that belt of blue sea! It is so long since I’ve seen anything like it. Never go on the stage, Miss Cushing.”

“Why not?” she answered, laughing.

“Oh,” cried Gilbert boyishly; “we are too near home for me to begin telling you the disadvantages.

Because you can't be your own master, and you can't have your meals at sensible hours, and you can't have as much privacy as you ought, and you can't go always in the summer to places like this. And——" He caught himself suddenly on the tip edge of a speech very unlike him, wondered at himself, and turned it off laughingly with: "The air has gone to my head; never mind what I may say or do."

She made some light rejoinder as they turned into the gate. Gilbert's thoughts ran something like this:

"What feminine, galloping nonsense! But what eyes!"

Mrs. Cushing hurried out. "My dear boy! Why, I thought that Dick—— Are you very hungry? The boats are fairly comfortable when it isn't rough—was it? I can never stand it when it's rough. Now, what will you have, dear? This is Philippa, of course. Dick—why, Philippa, where is Dick?"

Gilbert had kissed his old friend warmly, and stood with his arm around her, a slight act which transfixed Philippa.

"I'm so glad to be with you, Mother Cushing," he said affectionately.

"And so am I, my dear boy. Alice was well when she last wrote? Dick told me he heard—but what is Dick doing all this time?"

Searching and calling were in vain; the poet had disappeared. His mother showed signs of growing worried; Philippa noted how she turned to Gilbert to be reassured.

"He's out writing poetry somewhere—you know the way he does," he said. "He'll have something to show us when he comes in. I'm sure he's all right. Let me bring over that comfortable chair, and we'll have a talk. Did you know Scott was in San Francisco?"

Philippa sat by listening. A talk with her aunt

was almost always a trial to her, and she saw with surprise how Gilbert kept his hand on the rudder of the conversation, and steered Mrs. Cushing patiently. "He's a clever man, yet it doesn't seem to bore him," her thoughts ran. "Now Aunt Sue does bore me dreadfully—yet, of course, I love her more than he does."

Dick did not return to tea. Mrs. Cushing was anxious, but not so much as she would have been if Gilbert had not been there. Philippa was very much worried, and took Gilbert's quiet under it as callousness and a personal offence. She made one or two suggestions more or less vehement, and each time Gilbert had a bad quarter of an hour effacing them from her aunt's mind. Finally, when they had a moment alone, he spoke to her. "Your aunt's a nervous woman," he said, "and that suggestion of yours that Dick might have gone out on the water is just what I've been trying to keep from entering her mind. Don't you see? As a matter of fact Dick's all right, Miss Cushing; he's done this often before."

The girl bit her lip and flushed red. "I'm awfully sorry I spoke."

"Oh, it will be all right—you didn't understand, I know," said he, "and you're anxious too, of course. If I were you I'd urge Mrs. Cushing to go to bed soon. She oughtn't to sit up all night if we can help it."

He was half consciously watching for some haughtiness or resentment on her part, yet in his heart knew there would be none; she was too sweet at the core. As it was she raised her eyes and nodded understandingly.

CHAPTER XI

PHILIPPA THINKS

THEY were at breakfast the next morning when Dick returned. He rushed joyously into the room, patted Gilbert's shoulder in passing, hugged his mother and laughed aside her plaintive attempt at reproof.

"My boy, where have you—and I was so worried! You really mustn't, my darling. Where have you been?"

"Where have I been? Oh, out on the mountain."

"All night, dear?"

"Yes, all the divine night, under the protection of a crabbed pine. I couldn't come home, it was so beautiful, and genius burned"—he waved his notebook—"so I stayed."

"Your mother has been so anxious—" Philippa ventured, but Dick cut her short. All the night's impressions rushed to his tongue at once.

"Gib, such a night of wonderful sights! I've seen the heaven quivering with stars; and 'the moving moon,' Phil, that 'went up the sky, and nowhere doth abide'; and I've watched the dawn on the face of the sea. Oh, the crisp little wind that played about me and shook the silver alders!"

"But, my boy, it must have been so damp!" came from his mother.

"Damp? Not a bit. I had a bed of dry lichens, and the arms of an old pine tree spread over me. A withered old maid dryad she was, Phil, or I might

not have been back to-day." And he smiled a confident smile at Philippa, who, however, did not lift her eyes.

"I'm sure it must have been damp," reiterated Mrs. Cushing reproachfully; "out-of-doors is always damp. Ts! ts! And your coat, dear, damp through and through! How foolish, Dick! And then Gilbert came, and I had just what you liked for tea."

"Well, Gib is still here, and you have just what I like for breakfast," Dick replied gaily, and applied himself to the meal, declaring that he had never been so hungry in his life. He talked, and talked, and talked; and Gilbert listened, putting a word in here and there. Philippa watched the two in silence. The girl was undergoing a certain reaction. The tension of yesterday's little scene, followed by the conversation with Carne, and then a wakeful, worried night, had caused a drop in her mental barometer. She had been whirled along at a waltz pace during the last three months, but now for the first time the music slackened, and she paused to breathe and think. That point was reached for Philippa when a woman faces vital issues and comes to contemplate at close range the question of her future life, and it is a time when emotional feeling falls into abeyance. There is apt to come an instant of delicate balance before the final weight tips the scales. She found herself this morning observing Dick critically, weighing and measuring, seeking and determining; an odd mood, the cause of which she herself did not understand.

"And was Phil worried?" Dick asked caressingly. "Did you look out of your window and wonder where I was, little cousin?"

"I thought it was something of the kind," she replied evasively and a trifle coldly, for she had been very anxious, and she resented the poet's whim.

"You see I knew Gib here would keep you all quiet

and sensible," Dick cheerfully explained. "Of course, left alone, you two women would have simply talked yourselves into an agony. You couldn't understand my vigil under the stars."

"Yes, dear Gilbert! What should I have done without him?" Mrs. Cushing put in here. Gilbert saw that she was watching her son's damp and draggled clothing, in a fidget to get him alone and take off his coat and brush it; to exclaim, and scold and kiss him, and make sure that he was all right. So Gilbert rose, as if impatient.

"We've breakfasted, Miss Cushing and I," he remarked. "While you're dressing, Dick, I'm going to smoke."

This reminded Dick that he, too, had finished, and he rose to leave the room, a little wearily now, for the buoyancy had flowed out of him. Philippa noticed her aunt go up to Gilbert and murmur a question, and she heard his answer, "Oh, I don't think I should, Mother Cushing. He's all right—he doesn't need it."

A sigh and a look of relief from Mrs. Cushing as she left the room showed how she had desired this assurance, and that from Gilbert it was complete. Just then Dick called from upstairs, "Mother! Phil!"

Philippa rose eagerly, but Carne was too quick for her. He called up to Dick: "Miss Cushing is going to take a walk with *me*. We'll see you after a while. I'm not going to be deserted by both of you."

Dick nodded and smiled and disappeared, followed with alacrity by his mother. Philippa was standing uncertainly at the foot of the stair, when Carne turned toward her with a very gentle look.

"I rather think she wants him to herself for a little while; don't you?" said he. "Shall we go out?"

Philippa preceded him to the porch in silence. She was conscious of being annoyed, puzzled, perhaps afraid of him. She loved her aunt and Dick far

more than Mr. Carne did; and yet he had seen what her aunt wanted at once, and she had not. And he knew it, and perhaps he thought——

“Shall we take this path?” Carne suggested, and she assented.

They moved along in the sunshine, side by side—Philippa not a little constrained, and fearful too, though in the presence of things still novel to her; shy of showing him her interest in the place, her pleasure in the trifles by the wayside, such as the round pebbles, the unfamiliar herbs and flowers. And Gilbert, drawing deep breaths of the delicious air, was in his turn reticent, looking about him, and in a manner forgetful of her presence. No doubt she was charming to look upon, with the soft darkness of her hair and eyes, and she swayed beside him graceful with young vigour; but so far her personality had held but little charm for him. So he thought at least, as they set out, rather silent on the whole for guest and hostess. Suddenly the girl had an access of courage.

“Mr. Carne,” she said abruptly, “I want to ask you a question.”

Instantly he turned upon her his extraordinary eyes. The girl was not yet so used to their direct gaze as to undergo it without a certain thrill. Romeo returned to her mind in an irrelevant fashion.

“When I talked to you yesterday,” she continued, “about knowing Dick and Aunt Sue so well—better than you did—did you laugh at me?”

“No, indeed,” said Gilbert quickly. Then, with a pause and a twinkle, “Perhaps I may have smiled a little, Miss Cushing.”

“Because, of course,” said Philippa candidly, “you know I was talking nonsense. I’ve known them only three months; you, all their lives. I see my arrogance to-day.” She smiled with momentary humour against herself, which was succeeded by a wistful look. “I

suppose the truth is, I was anxious to feel intimate as possible with my relatives. You know I was away from all of them as a child."

"Your childhood must have been as lonely as my own," Gilbert said.

"Oh, but you had Dick."

"I had Dick and my sister Alice, but I was pretty lonely, nevertheless. We cared about many of the same things; but I always cared more than they did. Shakespeare, for instance. Did you ever read him and look in vain for some one to be kindled as you were?"

"Indeed I have!" Her eyes lit up. "And Dick didn't?"

"How she harps on Dick!" Gilbert thought with a shade of impatience, but he replied aloud: "He was younger, you know. And didn't you stumble across things in your Bible—and later, in your own life—that would not fit together, but which nobody else seemed to feel or notice at all?"

She glanced up with parted lips. "But I do still."

"Such as one's cousin's enjoyment of his own sensations and his experiments in them?"

"How *did* you know?" cried Philippa, stopping in the roadway and staring up at him. Gilbert felt inclined to laugh, her surprise that any one should have hit on her perplexities was so naïve. But he restrained himself lest he should cause her a return of constraint.

"I watched you this morning. Dick did not think of his friends' natural anxiety—and your vigil; he was enjoying too thoroughly the state he had worked himself into. You mustn't let that affect you; he will do it *always*."

He spoke with emphasis, but it was the first part of his speech which absorbed her.

"You do understand, don't you?—curiously."

"I try to. Is it so new to you as that?"

"That any one should take the trouble—yes. Why do you?"

"But, Miss Cushing, one *must* understand people, to help them."

"And pull their strings?" Her tone was playfully friendly to cover the depth of these impressions, and he caught the spirit of it at once.

"Or pull their strings," he repeated with a smile.

Philippa had grown much more at ease. She had entered the conversation as one enters a darkened, unfamiliar room, and now felt firm ground under her foot. They sauntered on, more easily, more idly.

"Has Dick talked much to you about settling in New York next winter?" he inquired, after a pause in which both gazed happily at the rounded mountains, folded in warm golden mist.

"Yes. What do you think?"

"I should think it might be a good thing." They had come out upon a jutting point of rock overhanging the sea, and there sat down side by side. Gilbert crumbled bits of stone between his fingers and looked seaward, for he knew she would speak of what was foremost in her mind. While he waited, he caught himself admiring the curve of her cheek, and the line of brow with soft dark hair curling over it.

"I wonder——" she laid her hands in her lap and spoke dreamily, "if it would be a good thing? I feel as if his is a nature that oughtn't to fight its way, but live sheltered and cared for among beautiful things—to help his beautiful thoughts, you know."

"Perfectly," Carne replied sympathetically. He looked at her with large tolerance which seemed to make him years older.

"I understand; but wouldn't that life make you or me rather slothful and rusty, perhaps?"

"But Dick is different," she began hastily, and

checked herself. "What a way he has of making you say it!" she thought.

"Work never hurt a strong person yet," Gilbert said decidedly. "Dick will have to keep his ambition bright and sharp like the rest of us."

"He has so much ambition!" sighed the girl almost to herself; "it makes one much more anxious about his than one's own," she added, not at all realizing how quickly her companion had unlocked the door of her thought, and, little by little, was drawing her problems from her.

"Let's hear some of yours, Miss Cushing."

"Oh," said Philippa thoughtfully, "mine aren't much beside Dick's and yours. There's all this money, you know, and the sense of stewardship about it. It must do good; I've felt that ever since I was a little girl. One must do wisely with it."

"That's not a small ambition by any means," Gilbert said.

"Do you know," she went on irresistibly, "I've been perplexed since I came home. It is different here from what I thought—the life is not what I had planned. There's Aunt Sue and Dick, for instance; they've become my family. I'd planned a life rather simple and severe, and just doing good with the money. No fuss, you know; just that life-work. Now it doesn't look so clear."

"Things do blend into one another at close range till there are no clear-cut lines left," he commented.

"That's just it, Mr. Carne; you say just what I mean. I find it is not so easy in this country to say, 'I'm going to live such and such a life, and do this or that with my money.'"

"I'm sure you will do right," said he. "But undoubtedly New York will offer you tremendous temptations in the way of an ostentatious social life; and the luxury——"

Philippa interrupted him with a scornful lift of her head and gesture of distaste. "Oh, you needn't fear that sort of thing for me—it doesn't appeal to me at all," she said decidedly, and then, with a quick nervous gravity, "How intimately I am talking to you, Mr. Carne!"

"Yes," he replied quietly; "I am very glad. Isn't that Dick coming after us?"

A tall figure on the beach made toward them, shouting, "Phil! Gib! Come along! I've got a sailboat, and the breeze is turning all the little waves topsy-turvy with delight. Do hurry!"

Dick's nervous energy had risen again and overflowed upon them. But once in the sailboat he left them, to Philippa's disappointment, and, stretching himself at full length in the bow, seemed to let the lap and rustle of wind and water stroke him into quiet. His face expressed exquisite pleasure. The other two talked desultorily at first, but speech soon died out, and on the whole they were rather silent.

CHAPTER XII

A TRIO OUT OF TUNE

"YOU'RE such a croaker! Where's the harm in Maynard?"

"Well, where's the good?"

"He's in the very thick of that New York journalistic set. You people don't realize that his friendship will be of the greatest value to me."

Gilbert smiled as he replied: "I know something about that set myself, and I know Maynard's reputation."

"What have I to do with his reputation?" cried Dick fiercely.

"It isn't necessary to introduce him to Miss Cushing, is it?"

"Phil wants to know my friends, and she ought to. She needs broadening." His magnificent tone caused Carne to break into a hearty laugh, and Dick wavered. He never could long resist the infection of a laugh.

"Look here, my vagabond friend," said he, "what's your profession anyhow?" But his tone was good-humoured again, and Gilbert knew that the invitation to Maynard would not be issued. A pause fell, and then Dick cried eagerly: "Look, Gib! The colour, the tumbling blue and green and white, that uneven ruffling of the sea! And feel this triumphant wind! What a day, set with jewels like the high priest's breastplate!" When Dick fell into similes it

was a sign of his tranquility of mind. The subject, so hotly contested a moment before, vanished as if it had never been.

The two walked on briskly until they came to a nook in the shore, a favourite resting place, where a deep cleft in the scarred cliff held a patch of turf, bright as an emerald set in silver. Below them, the water filled out a soft blue curve upon the little beach, cliff-protected on either hand; above, rose the plain rock, crumbling tier above tier, and festooned with short growth, sheep-pine, and grasses, till it rose to a bald pinnacle, the home of many a screaming sea-gull. No trees grew in this place, but above Dick's head and at his feet grew tangles of wild vine, its tender leaves threaded upon a scarlet stem. They flung themselves down, and Dick began to read aloud from a little sheaf of manuscript. He rested his back against the shelf of rock which sheltered them, and sometimes chanted, sometimes sang his poetry gladly out into the air. Never was a creature more stirred by the sun and the wind. Gilbert lay stretched out among dry soft grasses, and, shielding his eyes from the sun with his hat, looked at his companion. Dick at twenty-five was in many ways as odd-looking as at seventeen. The proportions of his face had not changed; there was still the serenely broad brow, the delicate, whimsical, pointed chin. His fine hair had still a curl in it; the slight mustache he wore partially hid the sensitive curved mouth. The ebb and flow of nervous energy in him made him like a transparent tube charged with electric currents, flickering and flashing. The little poems he read seemed to Carne to have real lyrical power and delicate imagination. They had a true, an individual music, too; but he found himself listening in vain for any gain in feeling, in depth, in philosophy. Ah, well, there was time enough for those!

"Well!" Dick asked, impatient of his friend's silence. "Do you like them?"

"Yes, indeed, Dickie; 'dearly, my delicate Ariel,' " replied the actor playfully. "You've some good work there—best I have read of yours for a long time. Let's have them to look over."

"I'm awfully glad you like them," said Dick, much pleased, and handing over the manuscript. "I was going to send them to the editor of the Oracle," he explained. Gilbert turned over the sheets, reading here and there.

"Not that one, I hope." He indicated a page, and Dick, looking over his shoulder, flushed, and his eyes sparkled.

"I don't know," he answered.

"Have you shown it to Miss Cushing?"

"Phil? Oh, no."

"What a lot of trouble women take," Gilbert remarked, turning a page, "to supply poets with material!"

"Phil will do anything for me."

"So I see."

"You see, Gib," Dick went on, after a pause, "mother likes her awfully."

"And you——"

"Oh, I suppose so, eventually. You know how it stands. You think it would be a good thing, of course?"

"I'm not so sure," replied Gilbert, well aware of the influence of these words. Dick opened his eyes.

"You're not. But why?"

"Bear witness, Dickie, you asked me. Because——" Gilbert suddenly paused. He was conscious all at once that a personal element was affecting what he was about to say, and the consciousness held him silent. Since that first conversation he had had many with Philippa Cushing, and had in his own way drawn from

her most of her perplexities. She was grateful, he knew it—and was his interest wholly on Dick's behalf? He was spared the decision by the appearance in the cleft of Philippa herself. At sight of her Dick sprang up, crying: "I've been longing for you all day! Sit here, and 'we will all the pleasures prove.' You *shall* stay—Phil, I say. Sit here—this rock is just right. There now, Gib, repeat something to us."

Dick's manner was half audacious, half certain, and Gilbert wondered if he was correct in feeling that it did not wholly please the girl. During the last fortnight her mood of criticism and reaction had deepened. Another man, divining and understanding this mood and its importance, would have respected and accepted it. He would have felt what she sought and presented it firmly, with an equal seriousness. But Dick's vanity, naïve and boyish though it was, prevented such clear insight. There dangled well within his reach this charming cousin and her fortune. In his capricious way Dick was extremely fond of Philippa, but he was fonder of playing with the idea; and he had a premonition that anything definite would lessen the zest. His caressing high spirits jarred Philippa's deeper mood. Did he not understand?

As often before when she talked to the two young men, Philippa found that she and Carne drifted into topics under which Dick grew restive. He was never happy unless he led the conversation and gave the rein to his loose and riotous imagination. With his vigour, vividness, and colour, he easily dominated any subject in the realm of the imagination; but of thoughts in which these qualities had no part he was quickly weary. Philippa had her own young, serious problems, intensified by a solitary education. Once or twice she had mentioned these to her cousin.

"Why do you worry your dear little head?" he had

replied gaily. "Your business in life, Phil, is to be beautiful and soothing!"

Again, some such topic had served to cast him into a black shadow of depression. He had cried himself down extravagantly to her as "a wretched plaything of moods and passions." He had thrown himself at full length on the grass, buried his head in his arms, and fiercely bemoaned his own faults and weaknesses. And when the reaction came, well—Philippa no longer remembered that anything existed beyond Dick and his high spirits. She learned to let vexed moral questions lie.

Now this fact came to her mind, and caused her to look at Carne with impatience at the contrast. He had helped her more, perhaps, than any one; yet she felt him unjust to give her none of his fire, none of that fine, alert intensity she knew him to possess. Why not? Because he did not find in her any tinder to be set aflame? Yet Philippa thought herself worthy of other moods in him than those of hard strength and satire. How many a woman has felt the same, grown restive under it, forced the interest, and by a spurious sympathy, perhaps imaginative, perhaps merely reflected, has presented a false self to a false other, and spent the rest of her life in miserably undoing the tangle of misconception!

The poetry which Gilbert obediently repeated, started a discussion. Dick was eager upon it at first, full of images, swift, fluent, overflowing. Then they drifted off into the more abstract aspects, and here the actor took possession, and was soon repeatedly hitting the bull's eye of the girl's mind. As often before, Dick soon found he had something else to do. The other two watched him out of sight, then turned simultaneously to catch each other's eye. Yet Philippa began at random. "I wish," she remarked impulsively, "that I were one thing or the other. I mean

either so self-sacrificing that I would never want justice for myself, or so selfish that I wouldn't want it for others. But to be just between——"

"I know. To see the other person's point of view complicates life."

"It seems to me," the girl continued, "that I weigh and measure, and am never satisfied. Perhaps it would be better just to rush ahead blindly." She spoke half dreamily.

Gilbert nodded understandingly. "You were going to tell me," he said, turning so as to face her, "about your plans for the winter."

"Well," said Philippa, "they are not very definite as yet. I shall get Mr. Bentley, my lawyer, to tell me of some one who knows the condition of the poor, who has made it a study. They tell me I own several blocks of real estate in one of the worst parts of the city, and these I mean to improve. You've read of model tenements, Mr. Carne?"

"Yes," he said. "It will cost a great, great deal, Miss Cushing."

"I know it will," Philippa replied in a satisfied tone, which caused him to doubt if she did know.

"This is to be the work—model tenements," he repeated, looking at her; "and for the rest——"

"The rest of my plans, you mean? Oh, they include Aunt Sue, and Dick—and you, and such fine men and women as are your friends and work like you. That's all."

"But how about society in general?"

"I've told you society doesn't appeal to me. It's such a waste of time."

"Forgive me," Gilbert said, and his voice took a note almost of tenderness; "but are you so certain? You have never been out, I think?"

"That doesn't make the least difference," Philippa hastened to assure him. "I know myself well enough

to know that the empty, frivolous life of society would be very distasteful to me."

"It isn't all that," he added gently; "a good deal of it would be interesting, fascinating, to a girl placed as you are. Then there's the training——"

"You don't realize what my life has been, Mr. Carne. I haven't any taste for that sort of thing, really. Why, I've never been to a party in my life! There's so much to be done, and so little time, and so many things better worth while. Then you and Dick, my friends——" she added, a trifle shyly; "I want my ambition to be worthy of yours." Her face glowed; for the first time she showed him freely her warmth of nature.

For Gilbert, the conscientiousness, sincerity, generosity, of these ideals had an indescribable charm. Three fourths of him, man and artist, delighted in the richness of this charm, the first of its kind he had ever felt. The other, intellectual and impersonal, was conscious of a doubt. This fourth did not guide his answer when, after a momentary pause, he said: "There's no question about that; I think it is."

"You have more patience with your ambition," said the girl presently, "than either Dick or myself. I've been thinking over all you told me yesterday, and I know in your place I should have grown faint-hearted long ago."

"Oh, some day my chance will come. Meanwhile——"

"You are independent, and can wait?"

"Not that, exactly. I meant there is so much to learn in the interval."

Philippa was conscious of a chill. To be eager, sympathetic, and to misinterpret is a very feminine mortification. The prick spurred her.

"To learn about others, you mean?"

"Yes, I suppose so. That's the actor's business."

"To govern people, Mr. Carne?"

He glanced up quickly, thinking, "This is better," and asked: "Why do you say that?"

"I was wondering," said Philippa, with a little nervous laugh, "which you really liked best—people or your power over them?"

He was silent; his predominant feeling was keen pleasure at this token of her courage and independent judgment. Every talk increased her charm for him. She went on, half seriously, half playfully:

"There's Dick, for instance. How you influence him! Is it quite fair? To bring all that power to bear on a nature like his—so simple, so unconscious——"

"Stop a minute, Miss Cushing. What makes you think him unconscious?"

Philippa stared. "Why, a temperament like his—a child's! Why——!"

"Are all children so unconscious? The only fear I have for Dick lies in his tendency to contemplate and relish his own emotions. That is like a child in one way, the child who is always pulling up the plants in his garden by the roots to see how they are getting on."

He spoke meditatively; the words voiced the girl's doubts to her own mind. She sat quiet, seeming to understand not a single fact, but a character with its tangle of tendencies and results. Like all her conversations with Gilbert, this one had a double effect—an increased liking and confidence in him, and a resentment against him for causing it. As the holiday passed, she noted how carefully he kept a portion of each day for reading or study. Almost everything about the man, so coolly and firmly governed, she respected and resented in the same way. He liked her, she knew he liked her, she was eager for his talk and help; and there he sat upstairs with his books!

"Mr. Carne's work must be very important," she

remarked distantly to Dick, one morning after Gilbert had quietly excused himself, "if he works so hard in his holiday."

"Oh, he always does," replied Dick, swaying the hammock in which he lay stretched.

"What does he *do*?" Her tone was impatient.

"Everything; he's a dig. You've no idea, Phil, what he knows. He's kept up German, French, and Greek. Sterling, the artist, once told me there isn't a sounder archæological authority in the country. Then he keeps up things like music and his fencing. You ought to see him play with the foils—it's fiery, feline, splendid!"

Dick swung to and fro, and Philippa sewed in silence. Presently she asked, "How's the play getting on?"

"Getting on? My beloved cousin, I've not looked at it for a month."

"And the translation of Catullus?"

"What translation of Catullus, Philippa fantastic?"

"Why, Dick, you know perfectly well—you were enthusiastic over the idea!" she cried in surprise.

"My Latin is too rusty for that sort of thing," Dick replied easily. He turned his head, and the sea breeze ruffled his brown hair.

"Dick, you haven't done a thing for three months."

"You women think poetry a question of perseverance." Dick sat up scornfully. "Haven't I lived near sea and sky? Haven't I rioted in sunshine? Haven't I lived out of doors on the breast of the *earth*? Of all the wretched fetiches grinding down the delicate, golden moments of life—work, indeed! That shows what appreciation one may expect. I'm going to live every moment, not wring results out of existence. The Greeks knew better."

"But you admire Mr. Carne for——"

"Gib? Let him work! Phil, you don't realize that Gib's great lack is his false philosophy of life. He's too confoundedly Hebraistic. We want more Hellenism—beauty, Phil, beauty!" And he subsided into the hammock again.

As was often the case with Dick, a suggestion eagerly combated at the time rose later in his mind to govern him. The next day Philippa found him writing furiously. Gilbert was also occupied, so the girl took her letters and walked to a corner of the shore. She was glad of a chance to think quietly about one or two things. Should she ask her aunt and Dick to occupy that big house on Madison Avenue with her the coming winter? A month ago she would not have hesitated; now she wondered if it might suggest too much—more than she meant at present.

Since Gilbert Carne's arrival it seemed to her that new observation on her part caused new knowledge of her aunt and cousin. Their attitude toward each other, toward herself, was something perpetually to be fixed. She had not felt the inadequacy of her dogmas to deal truly with them until contrast with Carne's point of view made her feel it. Almost every soul is at moments its own Newton, to whom a falling apple suggests the possibility of law. Philippa had classified her relatives so neatly, so finally, during the first month. And now Mrs. Cushing had begun to hint at the future, Philippa's loneliness, Dick's poverty and talent. The simple, irrelevant woman showed at every word strange complexities; and Dick, joyous, frank, natural as the wind, had suddenly developed sophistications. Poor Philippa! There is a moment of bewilderment for one cast into the focus of opposing points of view. It is as if those we love had put on masks to us.

While these thoughts occupied the girl, Mrs. Cush-

ing was in the house facing her side of the same question. She had seen Dick absorbed at the writing desk, but did not hesitate to interrupt him, for she did not know the meaning of concentration. To the end of her life she looked upon her son's dread of interruption as an affectation. So she placidly entered the room, made a remark on the beauty of the day, and sat herself heavily down in a creaking rocking chair.

Dick paid her entrance no attention, but wrote on, his forehead and mouth set into tense lines. But the irregular squeak and thud of the chair conquered him at last; his pen flagged, paused, and he turned with a breathless, "Oh, can't you stop that noise?"

"What noise, dear?" Mrs. Cushing looked around.

"The chair—I'm busy."

"You oughtn't to be so put out by trifles, Dick. Your dear father——"

"Yes, yes. Ah, mother, can't you leave me alone? Don't you see it jars—it——" He was writing again, and there was a pause. But his mother had something to say.

"Dick, I want to ask you—you can do that afterward surely. Dick!"

Dick threw down his pen, buried his head in his arms, and groaned. "Now, dear, you are so funny!" said his mother indulgently.

"If I listen, then will you go away?"

"I won't trouble you long, dear, really. It's only this half hour before the butcher comes. They are so late in this part of the world—and beef's so high! Everything is so much more expensive in New York, as I told Philippa. That's what I wanted to tell you."

"About the price of beef, mother?"

"No, dear, I didn't say that. It was our plans for the winter I meant."

"Well, we've discussed that. I must go to the city."

Dick beat a nervous tattoo with his pen. He hated plans and decisions. His mother, on the contrary, liked to set dates six months off and keep them at all hazards.

"That's it—there it is! How can we afford it? At home there's the house and Mary; we could get along—and everything cheaper. But in New York—Many's the time I've told Mary I could never do with only one if she hadn't been— And those flats! Rooms with no windows, dear. You could never stand that!"

"We needn't begin to discuss it, mother; there's no question at all about it," Dick said decidedly. "It's got to be done; my whole future depends on it. You make inquiries. I dare say you'll straighten it out somehow;" and he turned back to the desk with the air of one who had disposed of a difficulty.

"But I don't see——"

"Perhaps Phil will ask us to spend the winter with her," he interrupted. "If she does we'll accept, of course. That'll tide us over till my book comes out or I get an editorship, or something."

"Philippa—will she? But, Dick, I hardly like—still, as you say, till you get the editorship. And she must have somebody. All that money! I don't understand how it all comes to be hers, anyhow. I can't help thinking there must be a mistake somewhere. I thought boys inherited—and you're her father's own cousin."

"That makes no difference. He left his fortune to his daughter."

"Well, it's a deal of money for a girl, that's all I've got to say. I believe you'd find her father had something in his mind we don't know of that would make a great difference. I shouldn't wonder at all." Mrs. Cushing nodded wisely. Then she glanced up. Dick had turned his back and was bending over the desk again. She sighed, but at that moment her eye caught

the white flap of the butcher's cart passing the window, so she left Dick in peace.

It thus came to pass that Philippa's invitation, timidly given, met with an eager acceptance—so eager, that it caused the girl a momentary doubt of herself.

As time passed, she grew more easy, more intimate in a frank fashion, with Gilbert Carne. He had a trick of taking possession of her questions, dissecting, analyzing, and discussing them before her very eyes. Thus many bugbears were disposed of, and with the eagerness of a young and generous nature she came to have a profound gratitude for these services, inestimable to her present turn of mind. The only check to their intimacy lay in the presence of Dick, whose manner toward herself had a quality which a girl like Philippa is not willing to put into words before another man. As to Gilbert, the charm she exerted upon him deepened daily, although he valued it chiefly because of its richness of promise. He was too intellectual, too egoistic a man to yield himself easily or quickly; and yet in his loneliness it must not be denied that he snatched at this vision of a full happiness. Yet he realized it lay in the future, and meanwhile he was content to play to her much the same part as he played to others, in the constant exercise of an intelligent power to help.

One day Dick ran up the path, his face shining with amusement.

"What do you think?" he called out, some yards off. "Guess! Guess the most incredible, the most impossible, the most outrageous fact that could possibly exist by the irony of the Norms!"

Gilbert looked up, and Philippa cried, "Oh, what? Do tell us!"

"Scott——" Dick began. Then he fell over on the piazza steps in a sudden paroxysm of mirth. While

they stared at his contortions in amazement, he managed to articulate:

"The sun rises in the—west; violets bloom in—December; and Scott—Scott is going to be *married!*"

"No!" Gilbert ejaculated; "not Scott?"

"Hermit crabs, you know——" the poet panted. Then came fresh peals. "Oh, Gib—shall you ever forget his courting of Alice?"

"Do tell us who it is."

Dick fumbled the letter in his hand. "That's the extraordinary part of it. It's an actress—of all things. A Miss Leighton—Valentine Leighton, of San Francisco."

Gilbert's ejaculation was one so unusual for him that Philippa glanced at him, surprised.

"It can't be," he got out, rising; "that girl is not twenty! Scott—oh, it's nonsense!"

"Read for yourself," said Dick, tossing Gilbert the letter. "Do you know her, Gib?"

"I used to—at least I know her age. Let me see—'my engagement to Miss Valentine Leighton, of whom you may have heard. I need not therefore tell you that my time is much occupied in getting my affairs in readiness for my early marriage.'"

"He's crazy!" Gilbert said, under his breath. Philippa looked at him with a spark of antagonism.

"Why does it concern you so deeply?" she asked. "What can it matter to you?"

"Scott's an old friend of mine," said Gilbert quietly, "and I used to know Val Leighton—poor child! Besides——" He left the sentence unfinished, and Philippa replied with a certain significant earnestness.

"You had better leave it alone," she said, seeing that Dick was not listening. "Let it go. You go around opening people's eyes and throwing them life lines, and they don't thank you. They won't either."

They'll call you cold and brutal. They'd rather contemplate themselves drowning. You waste your time, Mr. Carne."

His face flashed rather than set into a keen determination.

"You waste your time," she repeated, as their eyes met.

CHAPTER XIII

SCOTT IS ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED

GILBERT's own affairs took him back to New York long before the weather gave any hint of autumn. He lived at this time on Tenth Street, in a house whose old-fashioned, high ceilings made life bearable even in summer. This apartment he had fitted with the furniture of the Bishopton home, and with personal belongings which greeted him in friendly wise. His sitting room was square; he had filled the unused fireplace with balsam boughs from near Philippa's cottage. Bookcases ran around the room, and there was a lounge in one corner, with well-worn cushions. One or two fine etchings and old prints hung on the walls, with masks of Kean and Garrick and a unique collection of arms and armour. A tall pier glass was the only suggestion of his occupation. Here he worked and dreamed, wrote to Alice, and made pictures for himself of his coming work, his nearing success or failure. He was looking forward to an important winter, the first in which his position was to be one of acknowledged leadership in the stock company which was so successfully managed by Granger. It was known to the public that in a year's time Gilbert was to head his own company, and the announcement had caused widespread interest. Not only was he a favourite with the general public by reason of his individual picturesqueness, but it was to him the few older men looked for what they called "the elevation

of the drama." The years when he worked were peculiarly barren of artistic intelligence.

Gilbert's ambition had little in common with that of his ease-loving comrades. The life which tends usually to dull and rust the intellectual faculties, served in his case to sharpen them. He wished to present strong, complex character studies, touched with mind. History, literature, art, science, should go to make up these, as they go to make up real men and women. He would build them tier by tier before the eyes of the audience as men's lives are built before the world. These figures should be clothed in noble poetry and moved by quickening emotion. A high desire this, and Gilbert knew that once understood, once appreciated, his work would gain a hold far firmer, far more lasting, than if he trusted to the mere graces and dramatic fire of the moment.

Busy as he was, it was some time before he paid Scott a visit of congratulation in his big, solid house on Washington Square. This he did one warm afternoon in early August. Since the historian's retirement from his chair at Columbia they had seen a good deal of one another. Scott was undoubtedly what is known as a successful man. He had inherited a comfortable fortune about the same time that his books began to bring him in a small income, and had a well-deserved reputation for learning. His style, if sententious, was dignified; and a certain ponderous irony had gained for him the name of a notable controversialist. As professor, he could hardly have been more unpopular; he had little sympathetic insight, and his personality was a peculiar joy to the undergraduate. The three years at Columbia had been one long record of offence and protest, and while the faculty had been willing to uphold one of their number in any reasonable position, yet it can not be denied that his resignation brought relief. Scott felt that

relief as a hit to his self-esteem, and stiffened under it. In New York he had few friends, and for social relaxation returned at intervals to the country town of his birth, where he was an Olympian figure, and felt himself appreciated. Gilbert was probably the only man who ever came to the historian's house informally.

The engagement had startled and perplexed Carne in about equal proportions. Knowing Scott's passion for solidity, respectability, Philistinism, the thing seemed extraordinary. Whatever might be the outcome, Gilbert was conscious that his interest, his sympathies, lay on the side of the actress of nineteen. It was she he thought of as he had seen her last, a thin, precocious, variable elf of a child with a head like a dandelion. What was she thinking of? he wondered as he sat opposite the historian in his study. The room was rich and comfortable, and more genial than its owner. Scott looked as elderly for forty as he had done for thirty; the student wrinkles had become furrows, his hair was gray. He had grown less pompous of speech, although his manner still lacked ease.

The absence of a sense of humour was no longer so obtrusive perhaps, but on the other hand he had lost a large part of his naïve kindliness. The two talked for some time, tentatively.

"A storehouse of facts," was Gilbert's inward comment, "but out of history, the truth does not interest him, and conventions are more convenient."

Suddenly, during a pause in the conversation his eye caught sight of a photograph on Scott's table.

"Is that Miss Leighton? May I look?" he said. "I used to know her as a child, you know."

"With pleasure," Scott replied, handing the picture to him. Gilbert held it between his hands, and studied it for a long time. Then he raised his eyes to the face of the man opposite with a sense of imminent tragedy. What a face it was! What

irregular, bewitching features, what lines of latent passion and intensity! How markedly vivid and artistic in temperament! Above all, how sensitive and young! He laid it down.

"Do you like it? It satisfies me better than the more elaborate professional photographs," said Scott.

"She is charming," Gilbert agreed. Then, as if irresistibly, he added: "It is an almost ideal stage face." Scott's eyebrows contracted, and Gilbert felt that he had been tactless.

"I hear she has a great deal of talent," he said.

"That is true," Scott replied, and added, with a "ha—h'm" of bravado, "although it does not make me less anxious to see her placed in a more suitable life."

"Miss Leighton, then, is to leave the stage?"

Scott stared. "Did you think for one moment, Carne, that I would allow my wife to appear in a public theatre?"

Gilbert struggled with himself for a second. They had drifted into the topic, and he remembered Philippa as she said, "You waste your time." Nevertheless, this helpless Polyphemus of a man—if a word could enlighten him!

"It's a very exciting life, you know," he said impersonally; "a woman will miss it awfully at first, unless one gives her something equally absorbing to do."

"A married woman need never lack for occupation," Scott assured him axiomatically.

"Are you going to give up work on the history for a time?"

"Give up my work? My dear Carne, you can not realize what an important point I have reached! No, indeed! As it happens, it is most inconvenient for me to break off and go to San Francisco so soon; and I shall have to work doubly hard after the marriage in consequence."

"Ah!" Gilbert said. To batter the gates of this shut mind was hopeless work; nevertheless, he would not have been Gilbert, had he not persisted.

"Being a player myself," said he, using Scott's own style and manner, "I know something about the fascination of the life, and the way it absorbs one's energies. Miss Leighton is no doubt delighted to leave it, and her affection for you will, of course, repay her"—Scott bowed gravely—"but on your part, will you forgive me if I urge that she is leaving a whole intellectual and emotional existence? Perhaps it may not have occurred to you that a period of restlessness——"

Scott checked him with a wave of the hand. "Certainly, certainly. But I think you overrate the absorption."

"Possibly. Do you intend to travel?"

Scott settled his eyeglasses. "Unfortunately, you see," he said, "my work will demand my close attention. I shall cut short the—er—honeymoon, and return here at once. The publishers wish my second volume before the spring, and I have had many interruptions—many interruptions."

Gilbert was silent. Scott shifted himself in his chair, with the manner of one anxious to convey information without seeming to do so. "Of course, Carne, you must realize," he said at length, "without my speaking of it—my—er—sacrifices in this matter. Naturally at home it is looked upon as—er——"

"Unwise?"

"I fancy so—I fancy so. But personally, my dear Gilbert, I delight in this opportunity of placing Miss Leighton in an atmosphere of peace. Her life has been a hard struggle. You may believe me when I assure you that I do not regret any of the sacrifices I shall undoubtedly be called upon to make."

"I believe you," said Gilbert. "But let me ask—"

while you are busy at the history, your wife—what is she to do?"

"To you I don't mind confessing that her education has been uncertain. In the interval of her domestic duties I shall see that she has the means to complete it."

"She will probably be fond of society," Gilbert suggested encouragingly.

"As my wife she will certainly not lack society. I intend to give several dinners."

With a sense of helplessness, Gilbert took his leave. The interview remained all day in his mind, and that evening he discussed it with Blakeley.

"You know Val Leighton," said Gilbert. "What is she marrying him for, anyhow?"

"Three reasons," said his friend cheerfully. "First, because her mother has urged her to do something of the kind all her life. Mrs. Leighton had the respectability idea. Second, because the mother is dead. Third, because there's been a religious revival in San Francisco, and frost at the theatres in consequence."

"Is she a gentle, adaptable little thing, Ned?" Gilbert asked hopefully. Blakeley rolled over and stifled a laugh in the sofa cushion.

"Gentle—adaptable! Val is the frankest, most audacious little Bohemian that it has ever been my fortune to meet. She's a combination of Robin Goodfellow, Pearl in the Scarlet Letter, and Peg Woffington. She's part bird, part child, and the rest pure genius. 'Age can not wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety.'"

"Poor Scott!" said Gilbert.

"That elephant?" cried Blakeley. "By no means. Poor Val!"

CHAPTER XIV

ENTERTAINMENT AT THE SCOTTS'

OCTOBER brought the opening of Gilbert's season, and his return to the even, regular, studious life. Dick vibrated between the seashore and Gilbert's apartment in town. He was bubbling with energy and the anticipation of his winter. It was Dick who brought home one evening and read aloud, with a mock-tragic emphasis, the account of the marriage of "Mr. Randolph Scott, the distinguished historian" to "one of San Francisco's fairest daughters." The ceremony had apparently been flamboyant enough to suit the most ardent reporter, and, knowing the bridegroom, Dick and Gilbert made much merriment over the details—the bride, the flower girls, and "the *élite* of the Pacific coast."

Six weeks later they heard that the Scotts had returned to New York, and scarcely twenty-four hours afterward the mail brought them an invitation to dine. Enclosed with Gilbert's card was a personal note from Scott, pointing out that the festivity had been set upon a Sunday, "as Mrs. Scott particularly desires that nothing may prevent you accepting"; and adding, with the air of importance which Scott contrived to throw round the most trivial detail, that it would be her first "'formal presentation to members of my family.'"

"He wants you, Gib," said Dick, grinning. "Whew! Old Scott does admire himself, and he expects you to confirm it."

"Why?" Gilbert asked.

"Blakeley's been asked, too." Dick chuckled. "He told me to-day that he met Scott yesterday morning, who gave him a long harangue on the subject, and wished him 'to clearly understand' that Mrs. Scott wanted to meet her old friends. Ergo: Mr. Scott was unusually liberal-minded to ask two actors to dinner!"

The night came, a chill, rainy one in late October. Scott's house was at no time a cheerful abode; on occasions of ceremony it wore an aspect of positive defiance. When Scott had bought it, he furnished it throughout with the contents of his home in a small town. This furniture was of the indestructible black-walnut and horsehair variety, backed against the sort of wall papers which were in vogue thirty years ago, and which, as they were "durable," Scott saw no reason to change. His library was comfortable by reason of its books and open fire; but, as he rarely used the rest of the house, it wore an expression to set one's nerves on edge. The parlour into which the two young men were shown, was large, the floor covered with a carpet of primary colours in a dogmatic pattern. The walls were hung with a gray paper festooned in gilt, and further adorned by three mirrors, which reflected each other in various degrees of distortion. Against the walls were huge, immovable, sulky-looking sofas, whose carved backs seemed to wear a perpetual scowl. There were large, solid, round, marble-topped tables at either end of the room, with large, solid, heavy, gilt-edged books on them. The centre between was occupied by a brown-satin circular settee, surmounted by a leering bronze bust. Between the windows was an ormolu clock on a pedestal. There were no lamps, but every gas jet in the heavy chandelier was blazing with harsh, uncompromising light, which would have taken the charm from a better arrangement. Even the flowers, two vases of which completed the

room, drooped their heads sadly in the white glare. This light, beating upon them, made all Scott's guests, young and old, look jaded; it took the roundness from soft cheeks, and by the lack of shadows seemed to Gilbert to have a stupefying effect on his mind. No article in the room was new, but all bore that air of being ticketed with a price mark, which belongs to furniture of a certain era.

Carne and Cushing found several persons present, none of whom answered to the description of Mrs. Scott. Their host, however, hastened to greet them and to apologize for his wife's tardiness.

"Preparing something especially fine in your honour, I suppose," he added, with an uneasy smile. The uneasiness communicated itself to Gilbert's mind as he looked around the room. It struck him that the hostess's breach of etiquette was an unfortunate beginning for her entrance into Scott's ideal society. No one but Scott, Gilbert thought, would ever have contrived a dinner party of such elements. There was Blakeley in a corner, with his smooth comedian's face and eyeglasses, talking to a pretty little cousin of Scott's, whose air of suppressed excitement and open-eyed admiration were as naïve as the cut of her frock, or the way she wore her hair. There were a couple of professors and their wives. The professors talked to Scott in the centre of the room, and the wives talked to each other on one sofa. The other was commanded by a large, stout, elderly lady, whose face wore an habitual expression of self-control. This was Scott's aunt, widow of a wealthy manufacturer, and in the historian's eyes the embodiment of dignified solvency. Gilbert was at once seized upon and presented to her, an introduction in which he read at once an appeal and a justification. Scott (he thought) had undoubtedly found it hard to reconcile this elderly relative to his marriage, and the presence of the quiet Gilbert

was his strongest apology. She stared hard at the actor, but her manner was affable.

"I've heard much of you, Mr. Carne," she said, "although I never expected to meet you."

Gilbert smiled, made some perfunctory rejoinder, and seated himself beside her. "I suppose Sunday-night parties are nothing out of the way to *you*," she continued, mentioning what was evidently uppermost in her thoughts.

"This is the first I've been to for years," replied Gilbert. "I always think Sunday should be a day of rest; don't you?"

"Yes, of course—certainly." Scott's aunt looked a little surprised at the confirmation of her views from so unexpected a quarter. As Gilbert believed, she needed but this sympathetic touch to unbend her.

"I don't mind telling you," she said, lowering her voice, "that only consideration for Randolph induced me to be here at all."

"I'm sure it's very good of you," Gilbert suggested, "when of course the shock of his marriage was——"

"Of course—it was a dreadful shock!" Scott's aunt had forgotten the profession of this quiet young man, and, as he had hoped, became confidential at once.

"I've read and been told," she said rapidly, shaking her jet-surmounted head, "that nowadays one can be on the stage and yet be a perfectly—you know——"

"Oh, yes, it's quite possible, I assure you. And Scott—you trust his taste, don't you?"

"Ye-es—except— Of course, Mr. Carne, I don't *know*; I never before associated with such people—in any way. Randolph tells me you know her—do tell me your impression."

"I knew her," Gilbert replied, "when she was a charming child, with a perfectly devoted mother."

"Ah, really!" in accents of still greater surprise. "Randolph never spoke to me about—Mrs. Leighton."

"Ah, she's dead, you see," said Gilbert, "and Valentine is motherless—so young!"

He had undoubtedly made an impression, and was all the more sorry that Valentine's tardiness should be so marked as to lessen the effect of his words. Her nonappearance had by this time caused a perceptible constraint in the company. Scott's uneasy smile had given way to a darker look, and his conversation with his guests flickered and died into awkward pauses. Gilbert caught sight of Dick, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his face set into a scowl. Gilbert turned quickly to Scott's aunt again, but she had stiffened during the pause.

"You may say what you like," she remarked to Gilbert, "but this is simply unpardonable!"

"Surely not," he protested; "you won't blame a bride for taking pains with her dress on such an occasion. Something of an ordeal too, isn't it? And a natural nervousness——"

The sound of feet on the stairs, and a woman's voice, high-pitched and excited, brought him to a halt. Every one heard the same, and in an involuntary pause all eyes were turned toward the door. The heavy curtains were thrust apart, and Mrs. Scott entered the room. She stood in front of the curtains, looking about her and smiling, in a complete silence, broken only by a gasp from Dick. The full light of the chandelier beat upon her strange face, on the mass of wavy golden hair which framed it, on the glowing orange and pale blue satin of her page's dress, on the splendid grace and poise of her young body which was thus displayed in every curve and line. In one hand she held a big black-plumed hat, with which she made a little gesture of welcome. Her face was pale, but the wide gray eyes were pencilled with bistre

and shone with mischief and laughter. There was upon her face an expression so intensely joyous and magnetic as to hold the eye. Gilbert thought of a splendid butterfly just alighted. Then he saw Scott's face, and then Dick's, thrust forward, glowing with admiration.

"I'm so sorry to be late!" The silence was broken by these words. "'Dolph, where's Aunt Sarah? How do you do?"

She advanced toward the sofa with outstretched hand. The beauty of her shape and movement was something Carne had never seen equalled. Her eye lit on his face; as she drew near she recognised him, and gave a little excited laugh. Then she turned again to the elderly lady, who, rigid with offence, drew back, ignoring the white extended hand in the lace ruffle. This movement chilled Valentine; her face clouded, and her eyes sought her husband's.

Scott was white with anger. He took a step toward his wife and spoke in a low voice, which was, however, perfectly audible in all parts of the room.

"Go and change your dress at once! You are insulting my guests."

She flashed a look at him of which the intensity caused Gilbert a thrill; stood for an instant as if undecided, then with a shrug and defiant toss of her head sprang from the room. The same silence followed the exit as had her entrance; it was broken by the host.

"Aunt Sarah," he said stiffly, offering his arm, "will you come in to dinner?"

Gilbert had mentally braced himself. He did not respond to Blakeley's raised eyebrows or the scowl of Dick as he stalked past. During that constrained and interminable meal he was turning over the situation, trying to decide whether Scott or Valentine was the easier of approach. Scott's guests may be said, without exaggeration, to have suffered acute discomfort.

Under the plain preoccupation of the host, there was little or no attempt to throw aside the gloom. Scott's aunt sat in silence, with a concentrated expression; the professors and their wives struggled visibly with dismay; only Blakeley and the little cousin from the country talked and bravely laughed together. Dick sat opposite Gilbert with compressed lips, directing furious glances at Scott. The chair on Gilbert's right was empty, and remained so. He devoted himself to the professor's wife on the other hand, and found that she, kindly woman as she was, shared to a certain extent his own concern as to their hostess. Trying as the meal was, the men's half hour together afterward was infinitely more so, and Gilbert was not surprised that their re-entrance into the parlour was the signal for a general departure. He felt, as Scott must have felt, that the guests "could no more," and anticipated the relief of significant glances on the way upstairs, and first conjugal exchange of "Did you ever in all your life——?"

As he stood in a corner, waiting, Blakeley slipped up to him.

"Aren't you coming, Gib?" he asked.

Gilbert shook his head. "Not yet."

"For God's sake," said Blakeley low and rapidly, "no philanthropics here, old man! What good can you do?"

"Do you see his face?" was Gilbert's reply, and Blakeley shrugged his shoulders and made off. Dick came over.

"I won't be long, Dickie," Gilbert told him; "go home and wait for me."

"Give *him*," hissed Dick in his friend's ear, "a good kicking from me." Then he too departed, and Gilbert and Scott were left alone in the drawing room. The historian took no notice of the younger man's presence. He prowled the length of the room until

the front door shut behind the last of his guests, then he dropped with a short sigh upon the round settee. Looking up, he saw Gilbert's eyes fixed upon him.

"Ah, I did not realize you had remained, Carne," he said with an effort.

"I was in no hurry," Gilbert replied cheerfully. There was another pause, and then Scott gave a bitter staccato laugh. "I suppose," said he, "that I must go and find—my wife."

"I wouldn't," said Gilbert, and there was another pause. Then he rose, came over to the settee, and dropped on it beside Scott, whose head was buried in his hands. When Gilbert began to speak, it was so quietly, so gently, that his words slipped in among Scott's tumultuous thoughts impersonally, as though a part of them.

"You see, you mustn't get to exaggerating all this. You'll find, I'm sure, that you think worse of it than any one else. It was just a piece of childishness—it must be treated so. No one present attached the slightest meaning to it."

"Aunt Sarah," said Scott, settling his eyeglasses mechanically, with a shaking hand, "will never speak to—her."

"She's far too sensible a woman for any such thing. Remember, it's all in the point of view. How should your wife realize your objection to her costume?"

"The impropriety, Carne! To bring the theatre into my house—before my aunt! The—the immodesty!"

"Ah, no," said Gilbert, keeping his voice a low echo to the man's thoughts, like his conscience answering. "She is not immodest—you know it. She doesn't understand. She's such a child. You must be very gentle and appeal to her affection, and she'll soon learn."

"It isn't this alone," Scott replied. "She's—she's different. I begin to fear that she may never be satisfied in a life free from excitements." He sighed, but Gilbert had possession by this time, and in the weariness of reaction just settling upon Scott, the domination came as a relief.

"I think," Gilbert suggested, "that I'd take a turn out-of-doors before I saw—her. She'll have cried herself out by that time." Scott stood up obediently. "You think," he said with a faint hopefulness in his tone, "that she realizes—that she regrets—the mortification to which she has exposed me?"

"I know she does," Gilbert said, and got Scott's coat for him. He had laid a hand on the historian's checkrein at exactly the right moment, and by providing an outlet for the more dangerous feelings had probably prevented a catastrophe then and there. With a man like Scott, ten minutes made a great difference. He was not a young man, and turmoil was not natural to his soul. Gilbert shut the front door after him, and was in the act of putting on his own coat to follow, when a faint sound struck his ear. The house was very still, and listening, he heard it again. It seemed to come from a little back room used as an office. Gilbert hung up his coat, and without hesitation walked to the door of this room, opened it, and looked in. It was a bare, dingy little place, badly lighted. A big leather sofa occupied the farther end under a window, and on it was a brilliant heap of orange and blue. The big plumed hat lay on the floor. From the heap came long-drawn childish sobs. Gilbert closed the door behind him, dropped quietly into a chair, and with his chin on his hand contemplated the heap in silence. By and by, conscious of a presence in the room, the heap stirred, a tumbled golden head was raised, and Valentine turned to look at him. Her face was blurred with crying, but a flicker of

recognition passed over it, and she used the old childish form of greeting: "Hello, Gib!"

"Hello, Val!" he returned with a smile. He took the hand she held out and shook it.

"My first appearance wasn't very suc—cessful," said Valentine with a quivering voice; "it was a regular frost, wasn't it?" She pulled a thick curl over her face and wiped her eyes with it.

"Why did you do such a thing?" said he, in a matter-of-fact tone. "You ought to have known better."

Valentine sat up in a movement swift and vivid as a flash of lightning.

"He had no business to order me from the room like that!" she cried. "Nobody ever spoke to me so in all my life before. It was my own party, wasn't it? If I chose to come down in costume it was my own affair. The idea! And what was there so dreadful in it, anyhow?" Her anger broke in a sob.

"You see there was your husband's aunt——" Gilbert began, wondering if she could ever understand.

"His aunt!" The gesture of scorn she made with these words! "That was what made me. 'Dolph talked and talked about his aunt—how good she was, and respectable, and what she had a year, and how she stuck it all away in the bank—oh, I just had to do something! And it was so long since I'd worn any of my things! This— isn't it pretty? Do you suppose 'Dolph will ever forgive me?"

"Oh, yes," said Gilbert reassuringly, "I'm sure of it."

"I don't believe it." She shook her head, and the drops fell from her lashes to her cheek. Then with a flash of mischief, "Didn't Aunt Sarah look horrified, though!" she said, and burst into a peal of laughter.

A sense of pain came over Gilbert as he watched

these swift transitions of mood. This creature of colour, light, and affection, what would become of her in Scott's hands? His gravity checked Valentine's laughter very soon.

"Do you remember, I was to be Ophelia?" Her face took on a much older look. "Poor mother used to talk about it. But then she always said it was best to get married; so I did. I wonder why she thought so, Gib?"

"She wanted you to be taken care of, Val," he replied. "She thought——"

"Well, I've been taken care of now for six weeks," interrupted Valentine candidly; "and, if you want to know—it's mortal dull."

Gilbert's lip twitched. "Hadn't you better go and take off those things before your husband comes back?" he said, torn between pity and amusement.

"He has gone out, then?" Valentine's face had a momentary look of relief, but it speedily clouded. "Gib, was he very angry?" she asked tremulously.

"I think when he sees you're sorry it will be all right. He's very kind," Gilbert said, wondering how much she cared for her husband. She sat, such a graceful figure, resting her chin on her hand. The mobile face in the cloud of yellow hair was not wholly like a child's, Gilbert thought. It had a certain picturesque quality, and a certain firmness of line.

"He *is* kind," she repeated with a little sigh. "Look," she drew the lace away from her wrist and showed him a turquoise bracelet; "he gave me that. He gives me lots of things. But, Gib, I wish he didn't hate the theatre so—for I do miss it."

"O Val!" cried Gilbert, who had been dreading to hear this, "You mustn't. You will get over it."

She shook her head mutinously. "I do miss it. Then you don't think he'll ever let me——?"

"You must try not to want it. Promise me." He

drew her hand away from her chin, and compelled the great gray eyes to meet his. "Promise me—try to do as your husband wishes. You won't miss it if you do. Think how kind he is!"

"Yes, I know," said Val. She withdrew her gaze slowly. "I'll try. But you understand?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, half wearily, half impatiently, "I understand. Now I must go. Good night."

With a bound she was on her feet. "I'll see you to the door."

"No, no! Go take off that dress."

But Valentine had been sad for two hours, and that was long for Valentine. Her mind was now diverted from the trouble of the evening. She swooped upon the plumed hat, and threw it upon her disordered hair at exactly the correct angle. She linked her arm in Gilbert's, and, despite his protests, insisted on going with him to the front door. She laughed up into his face, her wonderful eyes sparkling, and pirouetted on the doorstep in the full glare of the hall lights until he hurried out of sight. Half a block away he could still see her, waving her plumed hat.

"And now for Dick," he thought; "another butterfly to be broken on a wheel!"

When he opened the door of the sitting room a blast of hot air and tobacco-smoke testified how Dick had spent the intervening time. He sat in a big chair smoking and contemplating an empty tumbler. Solitude and meditation had worked powerfully upon his mind, for he greeted his friend with a black scowl.

"I hope you thrashed that Scott!" was his opening remark, as Gilbert drew up a chair.

"He was a good deal upset," he replied.

"Upset!" Dick rose and raved. The last hour had served to darken the hues of Scott's behaviour, and to brighten the beauty of his wife. Before Dick's

first paragraph was at an end, he had almost exhausted language in expressing both. He walked the floor, gesticulating.

"What had she done?" he demanded fiercely. "Nothing but a harmless jest—from *any* point of view. From mine, she should have been welcomed for bringing some light and colour into that assemblage of all the worst elements of provincial Philistinism. My God! What a sacrifice to the Moloch of moneyed respectability and middle-class sloth! Scott—of all men! Scott and his aunt to pass judgment on that woman—stepped out of the golden age! Shall I ever forget her entrance—and her eyes! Expression is too weak a word—it was electricity!"

Dick ran on. "Crabbed age and youth," "the martyrdom of art," these texts fermented in his brain and poured from his nimble tongue. His host meanwhile locked up the whisky bottle. When Dick's breath gave out he looked for it, and upbraided the callous Gilbert.

"To be obliged to stay quiet at such a scene"—he sank back into a chair—"without protest, Gib, without telling that Scott what I thought of him and his aunt! This world may do for you—you chilly analyst! It's no place for *us*!" (He referred to Mrs. Scott and himself.) "This deadly American utilitarianism—drab and dreary! How's that creature of youth and sunshine to live in it? But what's the use of talking to you, with your confounded Hebraism——"

"All right, Dickie. It was a fuss about nothing. So you thought her good-looking?"

Gilbert, in fact, helped Dick to talk himself out, for in Dick suppressed excitement was like compressed steam in a boiler. Better let it hiss off harmlessly in words. Gilbert listened, understood, and followed that high-strung nature up and down patiently, till the effervescence subsided, and Dick yawned and went to

bed. He was restless all night, however, tossed and turned, and talked in his sleep. Once Gilbert heard him say "Valentine!" When Gilbert dropped to sleep himself, the chief thought in his mind was not the scene of the evening, but an uneasy regret that Dick should have been present.

CHAPTER XV

VALENTINE AND SCOTT

THE portraits of Valentine Scott at thirty, with which the world is familiar, are a poor guide to her appearance ten years earlier. So much happened in her life during those ten years: it was her rapid development in this time which lent the woman on canvas that look of assured strength, the mouth its tragic droop, the eyes their intensity of suffering and comprehension. At twenty, one noted instead of these the odd facial angle and extraordinary mobility of expression, which made her face so typical a medium for the artistic temperament. The large, restless, neutral-tinted eyes set in the pale face, held one by what seemed to be an actual, inward fire. In contrast to her very feminine attributes of thick, soft, golden hair and youthful contours were her size (for she was tall and large), her strongly cut, irregular features, her broad and capable hand. It is difficult to convey any adequate impression of Valentine's unusual picturesqueness and unconventionality both of appearance and temperament, and at the same time of the intelligent force which underlay it.

Scott, of course, forgave his wife her escapade, and for a short time forgot it. Into her sobbing repentance she unconsciously threw a certain histrionic quality which made her difficult to resist. The sense of bewilderment and distraction she brought her husband was still half pleasurable. He even went so far

as to issue invitations for a second dinner, and this was doing much. But this second ceremony, although it remained unmarred by any indecorum on her part, was not much more successful than the first. Valentine had been thoroughly frightened, and as a result became colourless and dull. She moved among her guests at first timidly, then as one bored into silence, lacking ease or conversation. Her eyes were constantly seeking her husband's with a nervous intensity, which reacted in its turn upon himself. Once when she so far forgot herself as to laugh her own delicious, child's laugh, she speedily clapped her hand before her mouth, and looked at him beseechingly. Scott could not help seeing that his guests regarded his wife with a sort of indulgent pity, and was annoyed with her in consequence.

As to Valentine herself, she had looked about her with a growing dismay. The weeks moved on; her husband spent his days in the library, where she was not to enter. Hers were spent upstairs in the dull, ugly rooms. Was it strange that she came to look back with longing upon her life of the theatre? She had been a player since childhood, the work natural as breathing, but until the present she had regarded it only in the light of a drudgery necessary to support life. She had looked upon herself as unusually lucky in being able to leave it, to become the wife of a man with a bank account, and able hereafter to look upon it from the boxes. All her life she had heard this destiny envied; now she wondered why.

"I think," Scott would say at breakfast, "that to-day would be a good day for you to call on Mrs. Smith."

"I don't want to," Valentine would flash at him.

"You had better call on Mrs. Smith to-day," he would tranquilly respond, as he went to his study. Pursuant to his ideas on the position of woman in his

house, he did not often take the trouble to cast his commands in the form of requests, and this was a new experience for a girl accustomed to regard men as her very obedient servants. When Valentine would cry out, " 'Dolph, let's do something—it's too dull to live!" Scott merely stiffened and took no notice. He accompanied her to the theatre once or twice, but her excitement when there grated on him. Her extravagant dress, quick movements, and vivid gesticulation brought down upon them the attention of the house, for she always insisted upon taking a box.

"Pray, do not be so restless," Scott would murmur; "every one is looking!"

"What if they are?" She nodded her bright head at him. "*I don't mind, and they're not looking at you, you know!*"

Or perhaps she would find a friend in the cast.

"It is!" she exclaimed eagerly, half rising; "it is Teddy Vale, 'Dolph. Dear old Teddy—it really is! Oh, I am glad! I wish he'd look at me. Won't he be surprised, though? No, I won't guy him—I'll wait till next intermission. Then I'll go behind and see him. What, 'Dolph? Not see Teddy? Oh, but you don't realize—he's one of my old friends—dear me, years old! Where's the usher? He'll take it behind for me."

That night they happened to have a friend with them who was amused by aiding and abetting Valentine, so she had her way, and Scott had the inexpressible sensation of hearing Teddy Vale's greeting: "Why, Val! This is sport! Is it really you?"

All the way home in the carriage, Valentine chattered of past days. Once, feeling her husband's formal silence, she looked wistfully up into his face. "You didn't mind my seeing Teddy?" she asked anxiously.

"I must say I thought your enthusiasm totally unnecessary," was his reply.

Their first serious quarrel followed the evening when Scott had taken her to see Gilbert Carne's *Romeo*. She had been so much affected by the performance as to vex her husband thoroughly. Her head thrust forward, her lips following the lines, her hand instinctively trying the gesture omitted by the rather stolid Juliet, then her face streaming with tears—all this had tried Scott to the verge of endurance. He had chosen this very mood of excitement in which to read her a lecture after they reached home, wherein the note of irritation was distinctly sounded. He had, to use his own words, "forbidden her to make any allusion in the future to her late employment." In her overwrought state Valentine had been shaken with passionate defiance, and for the moment her tall figure pacing the room wildly, her drawn face, had reduced Scott to a silence of amazement. Then there had been a burst of tears, and in the reaction of annoyance at himself, he had said more than was kind or wise.

The incident had the effect of making Valentine sure of what she wanted—and that was her work. What if the life had been uncertain? There had been at least zest and colour; the touch of excitement, the thrill, too, of success. Here was Gilbert steadily going ahead—for the first time, she too felt the prick of ambition. The nervous energy of the girl, dammed up for three months, began to boil and bubble and threaten its banks. On the morning after the quarrel she woke in a mood of intense suppressed activity. She must do something, but first of all she must "make up" with her husband. Whenever Valentine was quiet, her strong innate sense of justice was always on Scott's side, in which she differed from him. There were in this disciplined nature heights and depths which Scott had never touched; it was enriched by a generosity of passionate affection. But a mind

like Scott's is too much occupied with its own deportment, so to speak, to come at the heart of things. When Valentine had made up her mind that she must ask forgiveness, down she flashed to her husband's study.

Scott also had spent a morning in reflection—in his sincerely conscientious fashion trying to fathom his “duty in the matter.” He regretted his momentary lack of self-command, but felt no better pleased with his wife that she should have been the cause of anything so mortifying as a loss of dignity. However, he was calm this morning and going to do his duty, at whatever personal cost, as he told himself. And he would not get angry with her any more.

So, when a heap of violets fell upon his desk and a warm hand was pressed upon his eyes, he did not turn away. Instead, he put his arm around her gently, and said, without looking up: “My dear, I owe you an apology for speaking without reflection last night. In my annoyance I fear I was hasty. If you had not been so extreme, it would not have occurred.”

“You know it wasn't true, what you said,” Valentine suggested plaintively, after she had begged his forgiveness in her vehement way, and had subsided tearfully on the arm of his chair.

“We will not reopen the discussion,” he replied, stiffening just a little; “I acknowledge I should have cast my objections somewhat differently.”

He moved slightly aside from her touch. It was extraordinary that after her behaviour she should appreciate the fact of his apology so little!

“Aren't the violets sweet?” said Val very cheerfully.

“Delicious. Where did they come from?” he asked, bending over the vases. She looked down on his gray hair.

“I stifle indoors”—she gave herself an impatient

shake—"so I just threw a shawl around me and ran over to the corner for them."

"I have often asked you——" Scott began, and checked himself. If there was one thing he disliked more than another, it was his wife's propensity for dashing into the street with something thrown about her. But this time he withheld the rebuke. "You have placed yourself where it is impossible for me to address you, Valentine," he remarked instead. "A chair, I think, would be more comfortable for both of us. I have something to say to you."

She slipped from her position with a little sigh, and took the chair her husband politely placed for her. He was always punctilious in small courtesies. Then he seated himself facing her, and adjusted his eyeglasses.

"I have been thinking," he began slowly, "that scenes like yesterday's might be avoided if you had some work to do. What do you think?"

She remained silent, staring at him.

"Has your holiday been long enough?" he asked.

"Yes, *indeed!*" she replied in a choked voice. Every particle of colour left her face. Scott was surprised and gratified at her emotion.

"So you do not object?"

"Object!—O 'Dolph, how good you are! How good you are! It's just what I've been dying to ask, but I thought that you—oh, how can I thank you?" She threw herself forward on his neck. Scott, surprised, but in a better humour with her than he had been for a long time, disengaged himself from her warm embrace. But he kept his arm about her with some tenderness.

"Then listen to what I have planned," said he, and Val, big-eyed, hung upon his words. "I have here," he tapped an open letter lying on the desk beside him, "a note recommending an excellent Englishwoman of

suitable age, who would be a most admirable companion for you. She would walk and drive with you, and oversee your studies. I will map out your work with her assistance. She is an M. A. of Bryn Mawr."

"A what?" said Valentine.

"Graduate of a woman's college, my dear; in other words, a suitably cultured person." Valentine looked puzzled.

"I don't see——" she began. "But go on, 'Dolph!" And she once more composed her eager, quivering face to attention.

"She could go with you," he continued, "to our church, and let you see what part of their guild work interested you most. That is a most dignified occupation for a woman. Then on the evenings when we do not dine out and I am not at leisure, she would read to you."

"But, 'Dolph"—she drew away a little in bewilderment—"how can I do all that if I have my work?"

"We will arrange that it shall not conflict," he replied, slow to understand her. Valentine laughed aloud.

"What nonsense you're talking!" she cried audaciously. "As if you could change rehearsal or performance hours!"

Her husband withdrew his arm from around her waist. "I was speaking of a course of study. I made no reference to the theatre," he said stiffly.

"You said *my work*—I thought, of course— Isn't that my work?" she asked feverishly.

"We will not enter upon the question, if you please." He turned toward his desk. There was a short silence. Valentine, perhaps for the first time in her life, was deliberately restraining herself and thinking hard. She possessed one valuable quality—the ability to see things as they are. The overstrained emotionalism of the girl vanished before the exercise

of her one intellectual faculty. She was thinking when Scott spoke.

"If this plan is followed you will find much to interest you, Valentine"—his tone was under such obvious control as to be worse than no control at all—"particularly in the guild work, which would be an excellent discipline."

She raised her head to answer him, picking her words. She looked much older. Scott's eyes behind the glasses, blinked under her steady gaze.

"I don't doubt it is—for others. But, 'Dolph—don't you understand? How can I explain? You see, I've made people cry and laugh as I wished; I've seen feelings in my face reflected on theirs. All that makes—everything different. I don't know why, but it does. Your guild, whatever it is, would bore me to death. Don't you see?"

He bowed stiffly, with compressed lips.

"I meant to speak to you about this to-day, myself. Then I made that mistake about what you meant." She made a little expressive movement of the hand, and went on bravely and steadily. She had all the native dignity of talent. "You see, 'Dolph, I'm afraid I made a mistake when I thought I could leave the stage and be happy. It isn't the life I want, exactly; it's just to have the work. I get so restless upstairs, you don't know! I miss it dreadfully. You're very kind, but—I suppose that's what I was made for. I've done it always, you see—like you and the history. I used to think how hard it was, how tiring, how badly paid; I never realized how I enjoyed every moment. Upstairs alone, I think things that frighten me. You're down here so much, you know. When I worked I was never lonely. I thought I would forget, but I don't. What do you think, 'Dolph, yourself? What had we better do about it?"

The frankness, the simplicity, the candour of this

avowal, would have seemed to many to promise the salvation of this undeveloped nature. In the groping anxiety for truth, for clear understanding between them, in the impersonal reliance on him to help in establishing it, some men would have delighted as the best indication of hope for the future. But Scott's reply was icy.

"If you wish to know my opinion"—he did not turn toward her—"it is that you are almost unwomanly."

"I'm only trying to tell you——" she protested, but he cut her short.

"We will not pursue the subject any further. What you wish is of course impossible." He placed his manuscript in order and dipped his pen. Valentine had risen.

"Randolph, you can't understand," she said in a low voice, but he made an inclination of the head and began to write. He expected a torrent of protest and pleading, but when he raised his eyes from his work he found he was alone.

His wife left the room with all that was worst in her nature stirred to the surface. She had made her confession in all honesty, with a quality of manliness, not desiring to ask a favour, but to present the truth, with confidence in her husband's help and sympathy. She had treated him as one anxious for this truth. By the exercise of an intellectual understanding of her nature, with affectionate sympathy, and with an equal frankness, Scott might have drawn her to him for life; as it was, she left him in a state of revolt, disappointment, and self-pity. Not only had he wounded her warm, impulsive heart to the quick, but he had set in motion all that restless energy, vitality, vanity, and artistic consciousness so strong in the girl. She swept upstairs with a sense of concentrated inner excitement, which was perhaps the most dangerous

force to one of her temperament and tendencies. Chance had it that half an hour later, as she came downstairs dressed to go out, Dick Cushing was standing in the hall. He had brought Scott a note from Gilbert, and had just put the historian's hastily scribbled answer into his pocket and turned to the front door, when his eyes met Valentine's. He paused, his hand on the knob. The remarkable grace of her figure in the act of descent struck him with a vivid recollection of his first sight of her. She smiled at him, and came down swiftly.

"Mr. Cushing, isn't it?" she said. Her voice was as strange as her face.

"Yes," Dick replied.

"Did you want to see Mr. Scott?" She turned as if to call some one, but he checked her.

"Oh, please don't," said he; "I brought a note and here's his answer. He doesn't know who brought it, because I don't want to disturb him. It's all right."

There was a momentary pause, but Dick still stood.

"You came to dinner with Gilbert Carne?" asked Valentine. "I thought I hadn't forgotten."

"I certainly remember," he replied. It required a positive effort of will to drag his eyes from her.

"My efforts didn't seem to be much appreciated," said Val, moving toward the door. Her voice had a bitter quality, but her face brightened.

"Not as they deserved," said Dick scornfully; "but then that happens to most of us." He opened the front door. A puff of crisp November air came against her face as she regarded the young man.

"Were you going anywhere in particular?"

"No," cried Dick, whose face began to glow response.

"Then—suppose we take a walk?" For reply, he shut the hall door after them and turned his face toward her. They almost raced along the street, talk-

ing fast. Of the pair Valentine was the taller, the more robust. Many a passer-by paused to look after the two faces, so extraordinarily alive and joyous.

At dinner Valentine was listless and silent. Her husband asked her perfunctorily: "I trust you spent a pleasant afternoon. Did you go out?"

She answered him, "Yes, I took a walk with Dick Cushing." A weariness of tone in her reply robbed it of all significance, and Scott was moreover deep in an important section of the history. He finished his meal and hastened back to work. His wife had the parlour to sit in, but she preferred to pace it up and down from end to end, stepping mechanically from one medallion of the carpet to another. Now and then she threw back her head with the impatience of a wild creature caged. There were books, had she wanted them, but books meant little to her as yet.

Dreams of the afternoon were pleasanter, and she indulged them freely. There was a dim but radiant mist about them for her. Over and over again she repeated to herself fragments of their conversation, or rehearsed a question and answer with its gesture. She caught herself saying, "The next time——"

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. BENTLEY CALLS ON PHILIPPA

WITH her aunt and Dick as her guests, Philippa came to town and opened her house about the middle of October. Mr. Bentley, the lawyer, had written her that this was considered early by the majority of New Yorkers in her position, but she replied that she preferred it, since she had much to do. Philippa, in fact, was impatient for the end of the overture and the rise of the curtain. Her holiday by sea and mountains had been delightful, but nevertheless the girl looked forward with a keen eagerness toward settling in that community where she had a recognised place, and starting what she considered the actual business of life.

The first fortnight was one of active happiness. There was the big, old-fashioned, solidly handsome house to examine and set in order. With her aunt's guidance and help in the details, this business of arrangement was pure pleasure. The selection of rooms followed for her two guests, the addition here and there of little articles for their comfort—the easy-chair for Mrs. Cushing, the bright-coloured cushions for Dick. The fact of money being hers without let or hindrance was yet very novel, and Philippa's education had not taught her to be lavish. Moreover, her life thus far had been cast among people of more or less limited means, and she had yet to become familiar with the easy luxury of the rich. Her father's friends

and acquaintances, no doubt, would have smiled at Philippa's careful, not to say timid, expenditures; but to the girl herself it seemed as though she spent a great deal of money in merely living, the scale was so different from that of Dresden. Certain taken-for-granted expenses for one of her means, such as a stable, the refurnishing of her house, and the more or less costly outfitting of herself for the winter—these never occurred to her mind. It was her conversation with Mr. Bentley on the subject of her philanthropic project which first opened her eyes to these things.

Now, Mr. Bentley was not only a man of high standing in his profession and a thorough man of the world, but he was as well a man of commanding social position. He was a New Yorker born and bred. The firm was wealthy and prominent; his wife was a woman of independent fortune. He had been a personal friend of Philippa's father, and knew all about her family and its traditions. He had always disapproved of the will, both as regards the heiress's guardianship and education, and her later independence, with the conservative sentiment that a girl of twenty-one is hardly fitted to take complete control of a large fortune. As we have seen, Mr. Bentley had heard with distrust of the sudden intimacy with what he termed "obscure country relatives of the family"; but when Philippa, in the glow of enthusiasm and decision, opened before him her project as to model tenements, this distrust turned to positive dismay. The presence of the poetic cousin was bad enough, but this was infinitely worse. From where he sat in his office chair, his dark, formal face turned courteously toward the girl, he surveyed her young and glowing one with an experienced eye. Her desires roused not only his disapproval from the business point of view, but also grated upon that dislike of all enthusiasm which his life had

bred in him. He was a man of thinly veiled arrogance, to whom mankind was divided into two classes—"solid fellows" and "poor devils"; or more technically, those who drew incomes, and those who did not. It seemed to him the greatest possible misfortune that this girl, good-looking, graceful, well-born, and solvent, should have a leaning toward that class which he denominated inclusively as "cranks."

"This project, Miss Cushing, would probably take more money than you realize," he remarked.

"Of course it will take a great deal," said Philippa easily; "but then something must be done with it, you know."

"It will not only take actual capital," he rejoined slowly, playing with his paper cutter, "but it will also serve to diminish your income. Those properties are at present the best-paying investment you have. Such changes as you propose would reduce the interest enormously, perhaps make a loss."

"What if it should, Mr. Bentley?" The girl spoke quickly, a little sensitively. "There would be plenty left to give me all I need, surely."

Philippa had been but two weeks in New York. This thought crossed the mind of the very shrewd man who sat opposite her.

"Of course, you shall do as you wish in this matter, Miss Cushing. The only thing I would advise is that you defer it for a little while. You must not forget"—he spoke deliberately—"that your father intended his daughter to live in—er—a certain style."

"He did?" she questioned quickly. "He had expressed some wishes, then?"

"Naturally." Mr. Bentley slid the conversation at this point to other topics. Her response to his suggestion had given him all he wanted. He spoke of other things, complimented Philippa on her business instinct in a kind, almost fatherly fashion, and, on

escorting her to the door, told her his wife would have the pleasure of calling on her before long. "You must dine with us, if you will," he wound up; "several of your father's old friends are quite anxious to meet you. I told one of them the other day that you were growing quite a business woman—your father's own daughter. Mrs. Bentley knew your mother quite well."

"Ah, did she?" cried Philippa, and left the office, warmed, flattered, stirred by this sympathy, and completely tranquil as to her lawyer's acquiescence. This pleasant feeling caused her to look brightly out upon the crowded streets.

"I suppose he's not at all accustomed to having women understand how to manage their own affairs," she reflected on the way home.

Mr. Bentley had a talk with his wife that evening as they were dressing for dinner.

"Louise," he called in from his dressing room, "the little Cushing girl came to the office to-day."

"Is she in town already?" said Mrs. Bentley. "I must call there."

"I promised you would this week. And we must have a dinner for her. I wonder what in thunder Martin does to my boots?"

"This week? O Jack, and I'm so busy! Why did you name a time?"

For reply her husband entered the room and took a chair by the dressing table, where she stood. Her pretty maid settled the shining folds of her dress, while she fastened a diamond ornament in place.

"You don't usually let me in like that," said Mrs. Bentley, looking down at her husband reproachfully.

"I had a reason this time, my dear. What do you think that child wants to do?"

"What? Marry the poetic cousin?"

"Worse than that. She wants to put up model tenements."

"Ah," cried the wife, raising her eyebrows; "not really? How very unfortunate! Who put it into her head?"

"Lord knows! She thinks she has too much money."

"Too much money! She must be crazy!" Mrs. Bentley's face was eloquent as she drew away from the mirror. "Why, she has not got more than three times our income, has she?"

"Not so much, my dear." There was a significant interchange of glances between husband and wife.

"She can't have much idea what it costs to live decently in New York," said the latter with some indignation. "No, Marie, not that cloak—my sable one."

Bentley glanced at his watch, then at his wife. "You look exceedingly well to-night, dear."

She smiled on him. "But this girl——"

"She has only been here a month. We have plenty of time; do sit down for a minute, for I want to talk to you. Really," Mr. Bentley continued as the maid left the room, and his wife took a chair, "I feel a certain responsibility for Bob Cushing's daughter. After all, I knew him pretty well, and he was always a crank and impractical. And you knew her mother——"

"Ye-es," said his wife tepidly, "though I never thought her such a beauty as other people did. Too lackadaisical looking, I thought—and utterly lacking in style."

"Of course," her husband agreed quickly; "still you did know her."

"I suppose the girl hasn't been anywhere at all yet?"

"That's it, exactly." Bentley in speaking felt once again that his wife was the only really satisfactory person he knew. "And unless somebody undertakes it she's not likely to. Of course the poet is

unknown to fame socially, and she talked to me very enthusiastically about 'her friend,' that actor Gilbert Carne."

"He's perfectly good form; a gentleman, so every one tells me," said Mrs. Bentley. "I met him at the Gordons'. Lots of people have taken him up."

"But, Louise," with a trace of impatience, "you surely don't realize that this girl has money! She ought to make a good marriage. And to get mixed up at the start with that sort of people—don't you see? It's my opinion we must exert ourselves."

"It would be a great pity," his wife said, nodding. "Poor child! She must be very much alone. Is she pretty?"

"Rather," Mr. Bentley reflected. "Attractive looking—anyhow, good manners."

"Well, I'll go call on her this week," Mrs. Bentley agreed brightly, "and do what I can. Perhaps I'll take her under my wing for the winter. You say she has not been out?" She rose. "There's the carriage, Jack. Do look and see if the lamps are properly lighted. Blair grows more careless every day."

Once in the carriage, Bentley continued confidentially: "You see, Louise, I don't believe in letting all that money be wasted on nonsense if I can help it. The model-tenement craze will pass if she has something else to do. Seriously, I think as an act of kindness we ought to introduce her this winter, but of course I can't oppose her openly."

Mrs. Bentley's appreciation of her husband's point of view was absolute. Years of contact with his unyielding sledge-hammer convictions would not alone have given it to her, had not her entire life lain in the same class and along the lines of his. She replied quickly: "Of course not, dear. I understand you perfectly. You can leave her to me. When she finds what's actually necessary, you know, in the way of

horses and servants and all that, she'll see there won't be so much left over as she thinks."

Bentley met her eyes affectionately. "By the way," he added, laughing, "of course she's absolutely inexperienced and ignorant of the world, but I found that suggesting a thing was her father's wish had some effect."

"I'll remember that," Mrs. Bentley said, and they talked of other things.

She kept her promise, although she was a particularly busy woman, and called on Philippa one cold afternoon a few days later. The girl was charmed with her, for she possessed innately the poise and finish which were merely on the surface with the younger woman. Philippa was won alike by Mrs. Bentley's personality and manner. She was a handsome woman, dark, and fine-featured, with a good figure and carriage, and that air of gracious domination which is really a refined assurance. She gauged the girl's little touch of dignity at once, and treated her with a sort of graceful deference, the judicious exercise of which is one of the most rare of social talents. Philippa was unable to tell at any given moment whether Mrs. Bentley treated her more as the daughter of an old friend or as a person of importance. She admired her visitor's face, and was not unimpressed by her dress with its perfection of detail. In her turn Mrs. Bentley's eyes were very busy. They travelled over the old-fashioned, comfortable, rather heavy room, with little, keen interested glances at the figure of the heiress herself. Philippa might have been twice as rich, yet Mrs. Bentley would have felt no such interest in her had she been less graceful or had less self-possession a manner.

"Jack has underestimated her," she thought; "she'll be a great addition— By the way, have you done anything about your stable yet, Miss Cushing?"

she added aloud. "My husband asked me to see whose advice you were taking on the question of horses. Is your cousin knowing in them?"

Philippa shook her head. "I had not thought of it," she acknowledged. "They cost a good deal, don't they?"

Mrs. Bentley gave the faintest shadow of a shrug. "Oh, if one goes in for it as a fad! But I suppose you'd hardly do that at first. Still, your family used to keep pretty good ones. I've driven in your mother's victoria many a time. Queer old thing it was, too—like a saucer."

The question was new to Philippa. "Then you think I ought to keep them? My mother did, you say? I had really not considered it."

"I think you'll find that it is not possible to be comfortable without something of the kind," said the older woman adroitly. "A brougham at least is indispensable in this town."

"Perhaps I own one which I've never seen," Philippa suggested, with a smile.

"If you have, take my advice and get rid of it at once. Those cumbersome old things have entirely gone out, and it would be more trouble than it is worth. But Mr. Bentley will talk to you about it, if you'll let him. I'm much more likely to be of use when you want a dressmaker." Her eye ran imperceptibly over the girl's simple frock. "What a pleasure it will be! This is your first winter in society?"

"I have never been formally 'out,'" said Philippa sedately; "but I do not care for society—it has always seemed to me a great waste of time."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Bentley, and did not make the suggestion she had called to offer. She was very nearly as shrewd as her husband. They talked a little, and then she rose to go. "Won't you lunch with me—just ourselves, some day next week?" she asked the

girl in her charming way. "Then we can talk over a date for your dining with us."

Philippa was delighted to accept. The visit was in the nature of a revelation. The reception room into which she was ushered was Louis Quinze, a medley of soft bewildering tints. Not only the faultless meal, but everything about Mrs. Bentley's house and herself, owned that supreme refinement of wealth—costliness presented with a simplicity which made it a matter of course. When Mrs. Bentley called herself a person "of moderate means" and intimated that her young guest was to be spoken of as wealthy, Philippa was a little dazzled. After all, why should she not have this and that? There was no reason in the world. The third person present at luncheon was a niece of her hostess. This girl was about her own age, exceedingly cordial and friendly in manner, and overflowing with what seemed to Philippa the incidents of an unknown world. Charities came under discussion, and she was delighted to find her hostess most actively occupied in many.

Afterward, in the carriage, for she had been invited to accompany Mrs. Bentley on a round of errands, she mentioned her own ambitions.

"Perhaps Mr. Bentley has told you what I am going to do?" she said in her little well-poised way. "I am so anxious to begin!"

"Model tenements, isn't it?" smiled Mrs. Bentley. "Yes, we think it very generous of you. But you mustn't hurry over anything so important; you must let Jack advise you." Then, with a change from half interest to full absorption: "My dear, you must have one of those new spangled velvets for a dinner gown, since you tell me you need one. Do let me choose it for you."

Mrs. Bentley was a childless woman, and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon's expedition. She threw

herself into Philippa's affairs with a heartiness which made Philippa think her one of the kindest people she had ever met. By a silence here, a suggestion there, an adroit taken-for-grantedness at the exact instant, she had won a deliberate way into the friendship of the girl. In the evening she told her husband about it.

"I'm sure she'll outgrow this whim in time, Jack," said she. "She has plenty of practical good sense at bottom. She only needs guidance. She has been too much with these flighty, unworldly sort of people, like the German professor and this poet. She hasn't any knowledge of the world at all. Just think, she had not intended to set up a stable!"

"No horses?" Bentley looked incredulously over the edge of his newspaper. "A Cushing!"

"Wasn't it absurd? Of course I told her she couldn't possibly do without them. With all that people will expect of her, you know——" and Mrs. Bentley left the sentence significantly incomplete.

"What does she propose to do?" exclaimed her husband indignantly. "Pay calls by the Elevated? If there's one thing that thoroughly riles me, Louise, it's this flinging away money on cranky, quixotic schemes, and then doing without the proper necessities."

"She needs to be taught how to spend; that's all," his wife replied. "It's natural enough, I'm sure, in a girl placed as she has been."

"Well," said Bentley, folding the newspaper, "she'll live to thank you yet."

Conviction carries with it a force that is impossible to mere scheming. Had Mrs. Bentley been a plotter for her own ends, she would never have gained the weight that she carried by her sincere belief, through all her traditions, of Philippa's unwisdom. Experienced woman as she was, she knew exactly how to proceed, how not to oppose or antagonize. She had the girl to lunch once or twice a week, "because it must be

so dreary for you alone with that old aunt, my dear!" and on these occasions she was apt to ask some delightful young man or woman of her acquaintance to drop in. In the shopping expeditions which were undertaken with her, Philippa found crying wants revealed, of which till now she had never suspected the existence. The number of things which "one must have" increased weekly. Mrs. Bentley held gravely and steadfastly to the fact that Philippa disliked society. "Better let her want a little," the elder woman reflected shrewdly. She had grown warmly fond of the girl, and on her part Philippa talked enthusiastically to Gilbert about Mrs. Bentley.

"She is *so* kind," she told him one afternoon about a month after Mrs. Bentley's first call, "and I admire her so much, Mr. Carne! You have no idea how charitable she is, and how good. And she has so many friends! I dine there to-morrow—a dinner given for me!" She laughed happily.

"And how does Mill's Political Economy get on?" Gilbert asked, smiling in a half-whimsical way. At her request he had given her a list of books when he left in the summer.

"It doesn't get on at all," said she frankly. "I'm afraid I'll have to leave those books for a while. There are so many things I must do, you see."

"I see. What does Mr. Bentley think of the tenement plan? Has he recommended you an architect?"

"Not yet," explained Philippa. "I've taken his advice and put it off for a while. He says I really ought to know more about the subject, and study the management of money."

"That's true. We'll have to do a great deal of studying," said Gilbert, and she smiled back at him confidently. It was just at this moment that, to his great disappointment, a visitor was announced.

Twice before since her return to town he had called, hoping for one of their long, confidential talks in which he was to drink deep of happiness, and each time she had been interrupted or called away. Yet she had been so markedly glad to see him.

This afternoon as he reluctantly walked away from the house, he kept repeating to himself: "It's natural enough she should want to enjoy herself. Surely, *nothing* could be more natural!"

CHAPTER XVII

AFTERNOON TEA

VALENTINE'S married life was not brightened by many more social diversions. Christmas brought a space of holiday which entertained her: for the first time in her life she had plenty of money in her pocket, and could run riot in the shops. And all the poor children of the district came to know her; her steps were attended like a royal progress. Then her attention was given to dress for a short time following. She had a natural eye for colour and the grace of line, but none at all for what is known as style. Her garments partook of her own picturesque unconventionality; and the result of her experiments caused Scott to look at her often in a puzzled sort of way, wondering why she appeared so different from everybody else. She was fond of long, flowing, high-belted, nondescript attires in soft brocade of dull hues or silks brilliant as flower petals; and these gowns became her astonishingly well, as did the pearls Scott gave her, which she twisted into the gold of her hair. Her manner of wearing both, though picturesque, made her a figure at variance with her surroundings. But such occupations could not last her forever, and as the winter set in, hard and cold, it seemed to freeze her spirit along with the trees and flowers. Her husband took her to drive sometimes, but she sat back in her place looking out upon the world with eyes plainly dissatisfied.

"Let us get out and walk," she begged, one par-

ticularly clear Sunday, in Central Park, so Scott dismissed the coachman and they descended. A winding path tempted them, so they took it, Val now and then pausing to accommodate her swinging step to her husband's precise pace. The crisp air, the dust of snow in the hollows, and the bright faces of children, all combined insensibly to raise her spirits, and her face began to glow.

"Oh, what a delicious day!" she cried. "I do love to walk when it's like this; it's much better than driving. Look, 'Dolph, at that statue of Diana over there. Don't she look cold, poor thing, in her mantle of snow?"

Scott was one of those who, if he caught you singing to yourself in the joy of your heart, would tell you the tune was wrong.

"Hera, I think, not Diana," was his conscientious reply. "And '*doesn't*' if you please, Valentine, not '*don't*.'"

"What does it matter?" she replied with quick impatience; then, when he sighed, was sorry, and tried by stepping staidly and demurely beside him to atone for her vivacity. But she could not long keep his step—not when the very sunbeams danced!

They turned a corner just as there darted across the path a toddling baby, who tripped and fell, setting up a roar. Down went Val on her knees in the walk, seized the crying child, and set it on its feet. Then, as if that were not enough, she continued to kneel and enfold it in her arms while she talked to it. "There, you silly little creature, you're not hurt! What are you crying about? Such an ugly face!" She imitated it, and the baby stared, all its features set for another wail, the tears still dropping. "It's the path you have hurt—the poor path is all dented!" She pointed dramatically to a crack in the asphalt. "And the poor path doesn't yell. There, there! it's better

now"— And she continued this half petting, half scolding, till the little face broke into smiles, and the child, in a sudden shy fit, ran off to its mother.

"It's not at all hurt—only a little frightened," Val called out to the woman, who was hurrying up. She replied "Thank you, miss" very civilly, but Scott detected a shade of curiosity in the glance which embraced Val's whole figure. The girl got up in a bound, and stood laughing and brushing the front of her dress, when she caught her husband's eye and her face fell.

"What have I done now?" cried she in a voice of dismay, which she had not lowered. Some of the bystanders smiled, Scott flushed, and they moved on.

"I wish you would contrive not to render yourself and me so publicly conspicuous," he remarked, when they were out of hearing.

"Did I? I didn't notice. What did I do?"

"It was not your action in itself which was improper, my dear Valentine. I had no objection to your assisting the child if you wished, but surely it might have been done without drawing every one's attention to us?"

"I do like babies. And people always will look at me," said Valentine dejectedly. "I don't mind."

"They would not, if you cultivated a greater repose of manner," said her husband; "as I have often told you, it is an essential." He paused and glanced at her, as if passing from the general to the particular. "And I think also that your hair——"

"Oh, it's forever coming down!" cried she, with a toss of her head. "Do you want me to fix it? Perhaps I had better before we get back to the street." In a flash she had her hat in her hands, while a shower of hairpins fell upon the pavement. Scott glanced about with acute discomfort, but luckily they chanced to be alone in the path for the moment. "Make haste, Valentine," he entreated.

"Then," said she, "you hold my hat for me," and straightway thrust the article into his hands, all the while laughing madly, as though there was something amusing in the circumstance. "You look too funny, 'Dolph—just as if you were a hatrack, and *so* solemn! Are you vexed with me?"

Scott swallowed hard as he returned the hat. "Not vexed, my dear," he replied in a tone which he felt to be magnanimous; "but it was scarcely— And what if we had been observed?"

"But it was only a *hat!*" she exclaimed sensitively, and Scott kept the silence of despair. If she could not realize her husband's dignity, he felt she was unlikely to realize any fact of importance.

The English lady, the M. A. of Bryn Mawr, had not long remained an inmate of the professor's household. Val had implored Scott with tears to send her away. "She thinks she knows too much to like anything; she doesn't want me to like anything, either. She wouldn't read *Jane Eyre* to me, but just that man they study at her college. I think I'll go crazy. She says he has 'a supremely subtle culture,' but *I* say, who can say he's subtle if they don't know what he means?" Val whirled upon her husband and flung him this query. "I love lots of books," she went on before he could speak; "I could act *Jane Eyre*, and I cried bucketsful over the *Newcomes*. And *Shakespeare*—she says a certain order of minds still admires *Shakespeare*! I wish she'd been West with me"—Val was on her feet now, flashing and gesticulating—"and gone hungry some days, so things tasted good when you got them! And cold, perhaps; so when you read a book and forgot about being cold, you knew that book was fine! And *Shakespeare*—if *she* knew what it was to feel tired and wretched, and then go on and say his words and see them make the people grow pleased and happy, and so grow happy yourself—And she

asked me if I were 'one of those people who admire views and sunsets, you know.' I said 'Of course,' and she smiled. 'Sunsets and Shakespeare!' she said; 'how delightfully eighteenth century!' It made me think of that time when I was a little girl, only fifteen; we crossed the Cascades in a hand car, and I sat out in front in mamma's lap all wrapped up, because it was winter and cold. Why, 'Dolph, I can see it now—plain as plain! The sun went down over the pass like a red ball, and all the mountains held up their white heads for his gold to fall on them. There was a fat little priest who'd joined the party somewhere, and he just looked up and said—under his breath, but I heard him—'All ye mountains and hills, praise ye the Lord!' But I didn't think that; I kept thinking about Shakespeare, though I couldn't remember a single word. I determined then I'd act him some day—that I'd do something good." Her voice quivered with the memory, and she sat down suddenly, clasping her hands together.

"Very laudable, very laudable, no doubt," said Scott constrainedly; "but more so if you carry that ardour into private life, my dear." She sat silent; his words and manner had chilled the golden vision, and it had faded, like some distant view before the touch of a cold gray mist.

"I rather think you misapprehended Miss Chambers," Scott proceeded, settling his eyeglasses and speaking in a tone of more animation. "Still, I am not myself fully convinced that the author you mention is of a sufficiently long-established reputation to be taken as a criterion of taste. I will speak to her about it."

So Miss Chambers passed on her way to tread more uplifted paths. To this day she speaks of Mrs. Scott as "charmingly intense, you know, but without atmos-

phere"! Her place was taken by a less opaque personality in the shape of an elderly widow, more concerned in the conventions than the intellect. Val's dislike to her was nearly as great, but she could find no cause for complaint, and all things were alike savourless. Even if Scott had been capable of realizing the dullness of his wife's daily existence, it would have done little good, for he was powerless to enliven it for her. He had no general acquaintance in New York, to speak of; he was a recluse by nature as well as by situation, and thus unable to place Val in any society whose novelty might have served to absorb some of her surplus energy. People, attention, gaiety, at this time, might have temporarily contented her, but her life was almost solitary. True, Scott had made a great effort, had assumed his frock coat and therewith a manner of heightened gravity, and had taken her to one or two professorial teas, preparing her on the way thither by a little introduction and exegesis of his own. But the effort had not contented him. Val's dress was striking; her voice, though not loud, caused heads to turn; her movements were unstudied and quick. In the monotint of her surroundings she appeared like a dash of scarlet, and the suspicion which attaches to any extreme attached to her. As for herself, she was simply bored, and when he asked her how the entertainment had pleased her, replied, "They were all so stupid and old!" in a voice which showed bitter surprise. Occasionally, as the winter weeks crept on, her suppressed activity broke its bonds in a way it would never have done, had it had the natural outlets. But this gray life, this mere going to school, this looking from afar off at the companionship and amusements proper to her age—all this tended to an effervescence of energy in more or less mad frolics.

"By the way, didn't I see your wife yesterday in Union Square?" a jovial acquaintance asked Scott

one day. "Playing horse she was; two little ragamuffins driving her like mad! Around they came at full tilt, and laughing— You could hear it on Broadway! By Jove, sir, she looked like Diana—like Diana, by Jove!"

"I rather imagine you mistook some one else for Mrs. Scott," said poor Scott with stately assurance, but with a pang, for he was by no means sure.

"Couldn't be mistaken in *her*," laughed the jovial gentleman. "Mrs. Scott, if you'll permit me to say so, sir, is a very beautiful lady! The men with me were immensely interested—immensely interested, by Jove!"

"It's very good in you to say so," Scott murmured, feeling disgraced, and went home in a turmoil. As a matter of fact, his agitated concern was wholly unnecessary. The jovial gentleman and his friends had seen nothing in the incident to criticise unkindly. On the contrary, the rapid steps, the flying figure, the joyous face, the laughter of the girl, had been a little vision of youth which brought only a touch of warm kindness and smiles without malice. But Scott would not have believed this; he was always uneasy as to the world's attitude, because he was never quite in touch with it, and he also fancied it as closely concerned with him and his. The lecture which Val underwent for this escapade was so polysyllabically terrific that it deprived her of the spirit to reply. She drooped, numb and dazed, under the ponderous weight of her husband's carefully controlled displeasure, and went out of the room to cry as if her heart would break. Her wild tears frightened Scott, and her involuntary shrinking when he drew near caused a sudden reaction and the assertion of his natural kindness. But although she seemed to appreciate and accept them, yet the somewhat constrained caresses by which he testified his full forgiveness did not rouse

her to other than a listless acquiescence. For a week she went about dully, without interest in anything, and plainly unhappy, but so subdued that Scott flattered himself he had made an impression "in my last discussion of her conduct." Then the pendulum began to swing back.

It was one afternoon in January, a full fortnight after this incident, when Blakeley called. To his great relief he found Val alone, and pathetically pleased to see him.

"Oh, how glad, how *glad* I am to see you!" she cried, flying down the staircase, and bursting joyously into the parlour.

"Mr. Scott is out?" Blakeley asked tentatively, as he seated himself, and Val took a place on one of the scowling sofas.

"Yes"—it was a cry of jubilation—"and that creature he calls my companion has gone to the country. So we can have a really good talk. I've ordered some tea—and we'll put rum in it—and lots of cake."

"Delightful!" Blakeley said as he surveyed her. The excitement of his arrival had brought a colour to her usually pale face and a sparkle to her restless eyes. She wore a frock of pale blue silk with strange hanging sleeves, and over it a stole of Oriental embroidery in gleaming colours. The effect of her figure in those surroundings was incongruous enough.

"I should have been here long ago," Blakeley went on, "but Gilbert got hold of me, and you know what he is. We've been running over Hamlet and Lear together."

Val's eyes gleamed. "He is going to do Hamlet, then, after all?"

"It's not yet fully decided, but we rather think he will. Gilbert's a great old boy," said Blakeley; then he added cautiously, "But I want to know all about yourself. How do you like it, Val?"

She threw him a look which met his comedian's eye with an irresistible sympathy. "Not so much," she replied, looking down, "that I don't sometimes miss what *he* calls, 'Mrs. Scott's late employment.'"

The tone and accent were her husband's to the life, and Blakeley slapped his knee and roared. But his laughter shamed the girl. "I oughtn't to do that," said she, dropping her hands in her lap and flushing; "he means to be—he *is*, awfully good to me. But, Ned, I am so horribly—horribly dull!"

They had dropped back into the old pleasant familiar names of San Francisco days. Blakeley whistled. "That's bad, Val."

"It's awful!" She bent toward him. "Why, I used to have a great deal better time—yet I'm quite rich now. But what is there to do about it?"

"Poor Val"—Blakeley felt uncomfortably that she was about to confide in him—"what can I do to amuse you? By the way, you haven't heard, of course, what happened to Teddy Vale out West?"

Blakeley exerted himself that afternoon, and was repaid by her keen delight. Story followed story, given with his comedian's twist, incident after incident, the gossip of the greenrooms, the mishaps and sayings and doings of her old friends and comrades. He told her about Mrs. Winthrop's interview with Johnson, the manager; of the supper Goodman gave and the row afterward; he told O'Rourke's last Irish story, and sang Miss Peabody's forthcoming 'coon song. They laughed until the tears ran down their cheeks, and Val was plunging and dancing on the sofa. Shrieks of her ecstatic mirth rang through the house, and Blakeley's voice was cheerfully uplifted in the chorus when the door opened, and there entered Dick Cushing and Mr. Scott.

There was an instant of awful silence, during which Blakeley got up and looked awkward; but it was

only an instant, because the situation appealed to Val's dramatic sense.

"Why, how delightful this is!" she exclaimed in a new voice, cool and suave, contriving meanwhile in some extraordinary manner to uncoil herself gracefully from her position on the sofa, where she had been sitting with her foot up. "Randolph, you are just in time to enjoy some of Mr. Blakeley's new stories. And Mr. Cushing, too—how extremely fortunate!" She shook hands with Dick and engaged him in conversation with that accentuated attention with which players talk to one another on the scene when the centre of the stage is temporarily assumed by some one else. This bit of histrionic dexterity obliged Scott to take the initiative in greeting and welcoming Blakeley. He did this in a bewildered sort of way, dimly suspecting the presence of mockery. Tea was carried in at this moment, and Val, still with her manner of graceful withdrawal, slipped into her place behind the table with the air of once more "taking the centre." When she noted that her fine-lady manner both puzzled and gratified her husband she breathed more freely, and threw in a few little extra touches in phraseology and manner and in her way of handing the cake plate, which caused the astute Blakeley paroxysms of inward mirth.

"Now, Mr. Blakeley, you must certainly let Mr. Scott hear the end of that story," she said; and so tickled was Blakeley by the little scene that, although the story was uncoined gold which he had meant to hoard, he sacrificed it without a word. "The whole business was too rich," he told Gilbert afterward, describing the visit; "the way she played off all the old points on him—Lady Teazle, you know, and bits of Peg, and the afternoon-tea scene in *The Countess Adriana*. Why, she smoothed him down till he fairly purred, he was so delighted with her good manners!"

The story raised a general laugh, in which Scott, after a wrinkling of the brows, cautiously joined. "I have never wholly determined," he observed to Blakeley, "whether the humour which is popularly, and I believe, correctly, supposed to distinguish the Irish character, arises from a quicker perception of antithesis than is general among the peasantry of other nations, or whether it is due merely to the lightness of mind which arises from a lack in that country of steady and sobering employment. I believe you enact these characters quite frequently, Mr. Blakeley; have you ever given the question consideration?"

Mr. Blakeley had not; and Scott proceeded to enlarge upon the point.

"I read some verses of yours in Harper's last week," Val said to Dick; "I wanted to tell you how beautiful I thought them. They were not the latest of yours, but those called Aspiration."

She spoke quite simply; it made reply so exquisitely easy, he thought, and he had never outgrown a sensitiveness on the subject of his work. He nodded. "I liked them better myself than the later ones," he said.

"So did I," said Val; "they were truer. They were very true to me," she went on in a thoughtful tone, with the inward gaze of one trying to seize an impression. "I seem often to have felt myself that blind struggle of your poem, and then the sudden opening of something in me to a beautiful thought which makes everything clear! Only my thoughts—those sudden, flashing ones I mean—are not so beautiful as yours, as that picture you draw; I wish they could be." She repeated a line or two in her peculiar voice, and then looked up. "I wonder if I understood it rightly?"

"You make me feel," Dick answered, drawing a long breath, "as though no one ever understood it before."

"I should like to read more of your poems." She said it without any consciousness or hesitation.

"There is a book—if you would let me bring it?"

"I wish you would. This is the first time we have spoken of your work," said Valentine, with a sparkle of recollection. "We didn't mention it on that walk, you remember?"

"It was better," said Dick; "we talked about yours."

"Valentine, I think the contents of that kettle have reached 212° Fahrenheit." Scott's voice broke in here in a tone of pleasantry, and Valentine obediently turned to make the tea. As she handed her husband his cup he glanced at it and said mildly: "Is there no cream, my dear? I prefer cream."

"Oh, dear," she cried, "I forgot all about it! Never mind—if you'll just wait one moment——" She was up and out of the room before they could prevent her.

"My wife informs me," said Scott, addressing Dick, "that several of your poems have appeared in the leading periodicals, and I am delighted to hear it."

Dick set his teeth, with the old boyish wince. "I have been very fortunate," he answered shortly.

"That paper of yours in the Oracle has been a good deal spoken of to me, Cushing," Blakeley joined in; "the one on Early French Songs. The Oracle's a good sheet, although I've no cause to say so, for it crucifies me regularly once a week!"

"Mr. Forsyth was very nice about taking that paper," said Dick; "Maynard, in their office, showed it to him. I'm to do him some more. But that was a labour of love, for I'm passionately fond of Villon, Belleau, and Du Bellay."

"You have doubtless changed your theory on the structure of the sonnet, which you had developed in the old Bishopton days," Scott said pleasantly. Then,

turning to Blakeley, "I had the honour to revise and correct a few of Mr. Cushing's early efforts when he was quite a youth—though not so *many* years ago!"

"As if," thought Dick, "I was still a schoolboy!"

"But where can Valentine be all this time?" Scott proceeded. "I had no idea that my request would deprive us of her society for so protracted a period."

At that instant her voice was heard, and she hurried into the room, alight with satisfaction. She had thrown over her dress the cape of her husband's mackintosh, while above her beaming face rose the curve and nodding plumes of a large picture hat. In one hand she bore triumphantly a good-sized, brown paper bag. Scott had risen mechanically at the sight, and in his consternation did not move quickly enough out of her way. There was a concussion, and down came the paper bag, instantly discharging its contents—*milk*—in a thick stream upon the carpet. "O 'Dolph," she cried, transfixed, "what have you done!"

"It's the cream!" explained Blakeley, and almost suffocated in trying to suppress his mirth. She threw him an indignant look. "I think it's horrid in you to laugh! They hadn't cream—it was just milk. The man put another bag inside, and said it would carry perfectly just around the corner. I forgot the pitcher—I was in such a hurry."

She was on her knees during this speech, trying to stem the tide with her handkerchief. "Really, Valentine——" But words failed Scott. He rang the bell and ordered the damage repaired. Blakeley seized the moment to take leave, for there were tears of exhaustion in his eyes. As Scott went with him to the door, Val raised her eyes to those of Dick, always steadfastly regarding her.

"You see, I never do anything right!" she said in a low voice; they had taken chairs as before.

"I don't see it!" was his vehement reply. There was a short pause, and Dick leaned forward, his hands clasped, his face tense with earnestness. "I wish I could make you feel that I am your friend, really your friend."

"Why, I do," she said sadly.

"I want you to feel that you can call on me at any time, for any service——" Dick drew a quick breath here; "it would make me—so happy if you would! Do you think you can be friends with me enough for that?"

She nodded silently without raising her eyes, and as Dick straightened himself in his chair again, she began mechanically to set the tea things in order. "I need friends," said she suddenly, and for an instant let him see her face in its quivering. "Oh, please, *don't!*" he whispered, with an intensity like pain. Scott returned to the room.

"That fellow Blakeley appears to have quite a vivacious turn," he remarked, seating himself uprightly; "he has quite a fund of stories and amusing anecdotes. Why, Mr. Cushing, you are not leaving us, I hope? It is not yet six o'clock. Let me see," referring to his watch; "to be accurate, it is 5.57, exactly."

Dick, however, made his excuses and took his leave.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FRIENDS

"DICK," said his mother, "where are you going?"

Dick stood in the doorway in evening dress, hat in hand. He had just put his head into the room to say good night when Mrs. Cushing called him.

"Out with Maynard," he replied.

"Again? You're always out with him—and Philippa and I—is it to dinner this time?"

"Yes," Dick replied good naturedly, entering the room; "at Martin's, then to the theatre, and to wind up at the Players'."

"You won't be home till all hours—now, darling! Last night you tossed, and turned, and talked, and to-day you've been so nervous—you oughtn't to go, Dick."

Dick laughed and rubbed his cheek affectionately against his mother's, who, however, for once was not diverted from glancing at him anxiously. He had certainly lost weight since coming to the city.

"If you didn't sit up and hang over my slumbers, mammy dear," he said, "you would never know if I tossed or not. Would she, Philippa?" He smiled across at his cousin.

"Don't be too late, will you, Dick?" Philippa said, hesitating a little.

"Now, lady mine, châtelaine of the castle," said he with mock reproach, "am I not a faithful seneschal? Your sleep shall not be disturbed, I promise,"

and giving his mother a warm hug he left the room. On his way downstairs he reflected, with the least possible touch of impatience, that there were some drawbacks in living in another person's house. He spoke of it to his friend Maynard, when they were seated at table.

"It's all very well to be comfortable," he remarked, settling his wineglasses with an air, "but you're lucky, old man, in not having to think of a lot of women. And my cousin is growing hopelessly Philistinized!"

"You oughtn't to bother with that sort of thing," rejoined his friend. "You ought to come along with us and have a good time. It's well to be free in this world."

Dick laughed and assented. He looked about the room, and gave himself up fully to what he termed the delights of existence in Bohemia. Dick had for two months past thrown himself into a section of New York journalistic life which appealed to him as the counterpart of that existing in the pages of Balzac. With such a literary precedent and the exercise of lively fancy, he clothed it with a glamour. His personality brought him a speedy and flattering popularity. The boy's mercurial spirits, his fluency, his colour, his vivid zest of life—these, without his talents, would have been enough to make him a favourite. His little lyrics, thrown off so easily and with such high spirits, were applauded to the echo by jaded editors who knew the rarity of such a spontaneous gift. Dick began to feel the exquisite consciousness of success, although he had not so far been able to obtain the position of large salary and literary weight which he fancied was awaiting him, and when approached on this score his friends the editors were cautious. Still, life was most varied and interesting at present; no doubt, he told himself, the position was on the way. Dick's imagination exaggerated enormously his own value among these

people, thinking his talent appreciated and impressive, whereas he was only a novelty. How was this boy, brought up as he had been, to realize that his little popularity among good-humoured men stood for nothing at all? He took it for true freedom and the beginning of fame, and saw it duly set forth in the early chapters of his biography. The later chapters—ah, he suspected those would be more serious, intense, dark, perhaps, but certainly not less interesting. Meanwhile, he did not even stop to realize that this life opening before him was so different from what he had planned. Had not a great artist said, "Un homme qui veut tout peindre, doit tout connaître"?

One fact was undoubted—that since the summer a definite change had taken place in his relations to his cousin. In that moment of delicate balance in the girl's mind, which had been reached just at the point of Gilbert's visit to the seashore, the weight had been adjusted imperceptibly on the other side. Gilbert himself was in a manner responsible; that is, he was responsible for the pause for consideration in both of them. Natural reaction played its part, and at the point when Gilbert's influence was withdrawn and the pendulum ready to swing back, Fate had other influences ready to step in. Philippa was in full absorption of her first acquaintance with the Bentleys and their life; she was busy; the effects of solitude and propinquity were, for the time being, nullified. Still, these would have counted for nothing beside the charm of Dick's personality, had he been in the mood to exert it on her as before. But Dick, on his part, had changed also. Bohemia was absorbing him to an extent, but there was also at work in him a force, subconscious as yet, vague, indefinite, but germinating, which was serving to alter his attitude toward Philippa. The night when he had dined at Scott's was the moment when, as it were, a lighted match had been thrown

capriciously into an airy room full of varied combustibles. The spark lay on the wooden floor, feeble and small; it crept imperceptibly along the match; it made no smoke; gave no token of its presence, but it was there. Dick was beginning to be dissatisfied with staying on as his cousin's guest—it irked him vaguely; he told himself he would be freer elsewhere, and then that she had changed toward him.

"Something has got into Phil lately," he grumbled to Gilbert one afternoon when they sat together. "What have you been saying to her?"

"I? What about?"

"There's something. Gib, if you were friends with a girl, and knew she liked you a good deal, you know, so that her face lit up when you came in, what would you think if one day after you'd particularly exerted yourself, and had her hand, you know"—Dick's eyes sparkled—"she was to interrupt your raptures with, 'When you're sufficiently worked up for a poem, dear, let me know and I'll leave you alone to write it'?"

"Did she?" Gilbert burst out laughing.

"She actually did! It was so sudden I had nothing effective to say. Look here, Gib, it's all very well for *you* to slash right and left at one's insincerities and involutions and wrappings and disguises, and lay bare these little inner truths, but you oughtn't to teach a woman to—it's a mistake." Dick twisted luxuriously, like a cat, among the soft cushions. "Her business," he ended sententiously, "is rather to hang the wrappings with garlands!"

"When was it Miss Cushing said that?" Carne asked.

"The other day."

"Where had you been—before the conversation, I mean?"

"I? Calling at the Scotts'," said Dick, turning to glance at the actor in surprise.

"I thought you had paid your dinner call there," Gilbert carelessly remarked.

"I had. Mrs. Scott wanted to read some of my poems." Dick buried his head in the cushions comfortably.

"By the way, what became of that position on the Oracle staff you told me about?" Gilbert asked, changing the subject.

"Haven't heard." Then, after a pause and another restless twist, Dick went on: "What irony of Fate that I—I, who require nothing of life but peace and freedom, should have to pitch into this money-getting fight!"

"You would make a splendid shepherd in Arcadia!"

"Yes, with a carved beechen bowl and a rude staff, and a pipe to fashion my songs upon, and Chloe with a neighbouring flock across the hedge! It would be delightful. As it is, I'm restless." He rose and yawned.

"The work you were talking about in the summer——" Gilbert began.

"Work! work! work! you everlasting dig! Gib, do you never enjoy life?"

"Yes, when I work. No, don't fling a cushion at me, Dicky. There's one biblical parable I do hold by—the one about the talents in the napkin. Everybody nowadays does everything so easily—the arts easiest of all. What wonder we don't produce masterpieces with the life we lead!" Gilbert was half talking to himself, and he began to pace the room as he did so. "I tell you, Dick, everything comes in the end to knowledge and growth. When will these people see that morality isn't a sentiment, but a question of the intellect?"

"And the emotions, Gib. Where are they in your arctic zone?"

"I said growth, didn't I? Everything that's natu-

ral is good in its season. Only, as the wise man saith, 'Take away thought from virtue, and what remains that is worthy of a man?'"

Perhaps some indefinite perception of Dick's condition of mind had roused Gilbert to expound this bracing doctrine. The young man, his sensitive face vibrating in response to the other's feeling, came over to Gilbert's side and laid a hand on his arm. The conversation had suddenly dropped into a key significant and serious.

"Gib, it's hard to make you out. Sometimes I think you've not a drop of red blood in your body, and at others you seem to care more than any one I ever knew."

Gilbert shrugged away the question. "Dick, what people forget is that kindness—*caring*—is of no use unless we try to understand. It must be active, not passive, or it's so much dead wood. And this is true: you can't understand properly unless you care; the two play into one another. But this affection without intellectual understanding—it does more harm than any evil in the world. Look at Scott, for instance: he's fond of Val, I suppose; he's kind, he gives her presents; and what is he doing with her?" Gilbert checked himself suddenly. As was sometimes his way, he had been answering his own thoughts rather than talking to Dick. A quiver of his friend's face stopped him. He slid his arm up around Dick's shoulders, and continued in a quieter tone: "Shall we go out a little, old boy? See! it has quite cleared off."

"And yet people say," Dick said very gravely, "that you are not religious!"

"People say so many things, and they know so few. What is religion in the last analysis but the crystallization of man's ideals? And I have mine, I hope. And I believe, and hold by, and have faith in them." Gilbert's voice was deep and stirred.

It was a return to the old, close intimacy, where words were useless.

They went out on a somewhat silent walk. Then the actor found he had an engagement and bade his friend farewell, quietly as usual. Dick, on his way back, found himself about a block from Scott's. On the corner he hesitated.

"I might as well call for those poems, I suppose," he reflected, "since I happen to be so near."

When she heard who was in the parlour, down came Valentine in a whirl.

"Mr. Scott has gone to spend the afternoon at the Columbia Library," she said, shaking hands with Dick. Then, with a lift of her head toward him, she added audaciously, "Aren't you sorry?"

"No," said Dick with a gasp.

CHAPTER XIX

FAME IS THE SPUR

THE dinner at the Bentleys' had been delightful. Philippa, in a most becoming frock, her mother's diamond star in her hair, had been taken into dinner by her host. She had enjoyed every moment—the lights and the colour, the graceful women and beautiful clothes, and, above all, the shade of deference paid to herself as heroine of the occasion. Mrs. Bentley had chosen her elements well, and Philippa found herself after dinner the centre of a group of girls, easy, interested, cordial. It was gratifying to see, by a glance in the tall mirror opposite, that she herself did not appear at a disadvantage among them. As for the young men, she had experienced a novel sensation in finding herself surrounded by these unknown, pleasant creatures. And every one was so jolly, so unaffected, so friendly!

When Mrs. Bentley said to her some ten days later: "By the way, the Stoneleigh Martins want you to dine there very much. You met her here—do you remember? She's quite a friend of mine; she was a De Peyster. I told her not to make up the dinner till I found out whether you would care to go."

Philippa answered readily: "Why, of course I will come with pleasure. I liked her very much."

In this way, although Mrs. Bentley never by word or sign suggested the fact "society" to Philippa, yet the acceptances multiplied on the girl's engagement

blank. Her life came easy to her, very easy. She had an advantage in that she had not been given an education, like many rich girls, which was totally at variance with the country and conditions under which she was to live. She was not French, or German, or English, but had been prepared to meet frankly and on cordial terms that world which is America. Philippa fell very quickly into the frank freedom, the poise, the independence of the modern girl, and her adaptability and absorption of the ideas about her made her very generally liked among the people she met. True, Mrs. Bentley had given up all idea of introducing her young friend formally by a reception or a ball. "After all," she astutely reflected, "she doesn't need it. Everybody knows who she is, and by and by she can do it by herself if she likes. If we can stave off the philanthropics for a year! She's too attractive not to be a success and marry well. I must have her with me at Newport in the summer."

It was Mrs. Bentley's absence of all attempt to control or direct her which became the source of her ascendancy over Philippa. Her aunt had always in a measure treated her like a child, and in the present hothouse atmosphere Philippa's little idea of her own importance grew daily. The winter moved on, and her life became busily complex. She had a box at the opera, and for a month never arrived in it without that complacent sensation of being a part of the picture. This sensation also went with her when she drove in her new brougham behind the new horses which jingled their chains so delightfully. Then there were those piles of letters and charitable circulars which came every day. She began seriously to contemplate a secretary.

It was March, and the books which Carne had recommended in the summer stood a solid, untouched heap upon her writing table. She would look at them

now and then, thinking, "I must get at those! But I have so little time— And Mrs. Bentley was surprised at my not having read that new novel which everybody is talking about."

Perhaps she would pick one up, but after the opera and a late supper the mind is not often in a good condition for hard thinking, and it was characteristic of Carne that the books he had named were not suited to chance half hours. Philippa would read a paragraph, then her mind would slide away, and the printed page disappear in a maze of colour and conversation. She had also been enlisted on behalf of many miscellaneous charities, a temptation to which she lay particularly open. Mrs. Bentley had encouraged her in these, hoping they would serve as safety valves to Philippa's energy.

"Aren't you doing a great many things?" Gilbert had suggested when she talked to him about them. "Hadn't you planned rather to concentrate on one or two?"

"Perhaps I did; but, Mr. Carne, everybody does, you see. Why, most rich people do a great deal more than I do."

She looked up earnestly, and he was silent. Into the tenderness which always touched his face when he looked at her came also a shade of regret.

"Scientific" would hardly have been the term used by Mrs. Bentley to describe herself, yet her treatment of Philippa was a commentary on the age when we are all conscious or unconscious scientists. With her full knowledge of the girl's family and hereditary tendencies—of that line of wealthy, conventional, material Cushings—she deliberately set in motion the proper forces to correct this little sporadic spurt of idealism in their descendant. Philippa, with a mind not flexible and closed upon an idea of herself, was not open to observe processes of change. Gilbert had said

to himself hopefully: "Lent will come, and then we shall have more talks together."

For she was always glad to see him. Her feeling for him was unique: he was her friend and helper, who had turned a key for her in the door of life. One night after the play he went home with Dick. It had been snowy and crisp; the warm air of the house was delicious after the draughty theatre. They two were sitting in the library over the fire when the front door opened; there was a whiff of cold air, and the noise of bright voices and laughter. Then there were feet on the stairs, and presently Philippa came gaily in, her eyes shining, her cheeks glowing, the white fur of her opera cloak enveloping her.

"Well, how was it?" Dick asked, as Gilbert aided Philippa to lay aside her cloak and scarf. Her look met his with a happy smile, as she shook herself free and walked toward the fire, a charming, satin-clad figure.

"Tell us what it was first," Gilbert asked, his eyes following her.

"Oh, only a dinner," Philippa explained. She held a foot to the coals as she talked, one hand holding up her skirt, the other outstretched, touching the mantel-shelf. A thin line of diamonds on the arm gleamed like a streak of fire. Philippa's figure had that proportion and curve and that poise of the head which constitute style. How different, Gilbert thought, from the flowing grace of Valentine, and yet not less beautiful!

"It was rather a large dinner at the Duers'. Every body one knows was there."

"Did you see anybody who looked better than you do in that peach-bloom thing?" Dick asked lazily. Philippa glanced down complacently at the satin folds.

"This dress ~~is~~ pretty," she replied, "but you should

see my new one. Mrs. Bentley's dressmaker is making it, and—— Oh, by the way," she broke off, turning toward Gilbert, "I was sorry to hear such accounts of your friends the Scotts, Mr. Carne."

"What accounts?" Gilbert drew nearer, with a touch of anxiety.

"I went in to dinner with a man who told me he had taken a post-graduate course under Mr. Scott," Philippa went on, holding one foot and then the other to the welcome heat, "and he had heard it from some professors or people he knows. It appears they're not happy together at all; they don't get on, and people say there is sure to be a separation. I don't wonder, do you? Such an absurd thing for him to marry that kind of a girl!"

"I fancy it is merely gossip," said Gilbert hastily. A pair of purple shadows had suddenly sprung into existence under Dick's eyes. He sat silent.

"Oh, but I hear she's perfectly impossible," Philippa rejoined confidently, turning to look at them over her shoulder, "and of course he doesn't like the things she does. Why, only the other day——"

"Look out, Miss Cushing, your ruffle is almost on the coals!" Gilbert interrupted her, springing forward. He drew the fold of her dress away, looking steadfastly up at her meanwhile. But Philippa, with her mind as usual closed upon its idea, ran briskly on: "Thanks! The other day somebody met Mrs. Scott in Central Park talking and laughing with some queer-looking man. He said she clapped her hands like a little child, and they walked so fast, and talked so breathlessly, that everybody turned to look at them. He said the man was a freak——"

"I'm obliged to him," cried out Dick suddenly and savagely, "for I was the man!"

"You? Oh, but Dick—he said—oh, he must have seen some one else!" said Philippa, a flood of scarlet

covering her cheeks. Gilbert's face was quiet and rather cold.

"I took a walk in the Park with Mrs. Scott last week," said Dick shortly, "and I don't care who knows it——"

Gilbert interrupted him evenly. "I think most of what you heard must have been exaggerated gossip, Miss Cushing. Scott is busy with his history just now, and naturally depends on his wife's friends more than he would do were he at leisure. He wants her to enjoy herself, of course. I think that's all there is in it."

Philippa said nothing; she was annoyed. Her mind could see no object in altogether sparing her cousin, if it had really been he. Dick ought to be more careful while he was staying in her house. What would people say? He ought to consider *her* a little. She wondered what Mrs. Bentley would think. And really, Gilbert presumed somewhat. Miss Cushing, one should not forget, had just been the central figure of the Duers' dinner, and the last month or two had tended to exercise and toughen the fibre of her self-esteem. Nevertheless, when Gilbert took his leave a moment or two later, she followed him to the stair and gave him her hand. He paused and looked down upon her. "I'm looking forward to Lent," he began; then, with a change of tone, "I have vexed you in some way. What is it?"

"Oh, no; you're exaggerating it," she told him, with a smile. But Gilbert, thinking to himself "I must have been hard or egotistic in something," did not relax the sensitive gravity of his face. Had Philippa been able to look on that face with a mind equally flexible and sensitive she would have seen much; but all her doors and windows were tight shut, to keep within the memories of a brilliant evening.

"Please tell me what it is," he asked.

"Indeed nothing, only—" she spoke brightly and hardly, "surely I've a right to scold Dick, I think, if he will be so silly?"

Gilbert bade her good-night and went downstairs. He had not found it before so hard to make her understand, and it made him impatient when it did not cause him to fear he was himself to blame. It was his habit to blame himself for everything, and leave himself no margin to be charged to the account of Fate.

With the coming of April his plans for starring next season began rapidly to take shape. The winter's success had inspired Granger with confidence, but he did grumble mildly at Gilbert's choice of a Shakespearean tragedy in which he was to make his bid for fame. The difficulty of finding a leading woman remained apparently insurmountable, but the other details occupied Gilbert's time. He remained at the theatre early and late, and for a time saw little of his friends.

One morning, just before rehearsal, there came down upon him in the passageway a tall figure thickly veiled. If he had not recognised the step, swinging and free, he would have known the yellow curl that escaped the veil, and the flash of eyes behind it.

"Val!" he exclaimed doubtfully.

"I have run away!" cried Valentine. She seized his hand between both of hers and shook it. Then she pushed up her veil with an impatient gesture as if to shake herself free of it, and glanced rapidly around her. "Oh, it's delicious!" She drew a long breath, half closed her eyes, and laughed like an excited child. "The doorkeeper thought," she explained, "that I was a soubrette begging for an engagement. But I got through. He said you were here. Ah, Gib, let's see how it looks!"

She slipped by him, through the wings on to the bare stage. Her movement had been one of delight;

but now her mood changed—he heard her sigh. She looked long at the bleak, empty auditorium, then slowly round at the dusty place, the patches of pale daylight, the shadows, and the yellow gas jet lighting up a dusky corner. She turned imperiously on Gilbert.

“I must talk to you!”

“The office is empty,” he replied, and led the way to Granger’s hole of an office, littered with managerial paraphernalia. Valentine threw herself upon the leather sofa, switched off her gloves, and began to wring and twist them between her nervous fingers. In its pale intensity her face vibrated. Carne shook his head disapprovingly, and instantly it flashed into defiant laughter, as a pool is touched by a sunbeam.

“I ran away.” She swung the gloves to and fro. “That woman he has to look after me—she nearly drives me frantic. Ugly old thing! I felt if I heard the word ‘proper’ again I should kill her. Yes—really—I’m not joking. So I got up and said, ‘I’m going out.’ ‘It’s not time,’ said she. ‘I’m going alone,’ I said, ‘to call on my friend Mr. Carne at the theatre.’ ‘Oh,’ said she, ‘I fear that’s hardly proper.’ So then I made a regular Sarah Bernhardt tiger spring for the door, and she got white as a sheet. I guess she thinks I’m crazy. Then I came.”

The vividness of this little recital filled Gilbert with professional regret, but he did not laugh or applaud, as she had expected; he simply waited.

“And now,” she said with a change of tone. “I have a mind to stay away for good.”

“Oh no you won’t, Val,” said he gently.

“Well”—she looked up defiantly—“I’d like to know what’s the good of my staying? ‘Dolph doesn’t care for me any more. Oh, you needn’t shake your head; it’s the truth. And more than that’”—she thrust her face toward him, resting her chin on her

clasped hands; the brows were knitted, and she spoke earnestly—"I've tried to do as you said; honestly, I've tried. But now I tell you"—she flung the words at him—"if I don't have work to do, something will happen. Gib, I can't stand it! Gib, I'm too unhappy—I can't stand it!"

"Poor Val!" he murmured. "You must be brave—you must fight it out."

"But you don't understand," she replied with one of her gestures. "I can talk to you and there's no one else, Gib. I see there are two things for people in living: there's having one's work and there's being loved. You ought to have both; but, Gib, you *must* have one!"

Gilbert made no answer; his eyes were pained.

"And I have neither," Valentine finished numbly. Then, after a pause, "What is one to do?"

"Be brave, Val!" he replied steadfastly. "Be plucky! Fight on——"

"Ah!" she interrupted him, half scornfully, with a turn of her head. Then she said abruptly, "You are going to star next year?"

"I hope so."

"A New York season?"

"Yes. We open in October."

"Who's to be lead?"

"It's not yet decided." He hoped her questioning would go no further.

"What do you open with?"

"Hamlet," said Gilbert reluctantly. She leaned forward.

"Not Miss Gordon for Ophelia?"

"It looks that way, certainly."

"Ophelia! O Gilbert!" She rose to her feet and poured out the words passionately. "He must let me! I can't stand it! I can't! He must let me! She'll ruin it! And Shakespeare, you know—my first chance!

Oh, he must consent! Shakespeare's different—Shakespeare's proper. And you're his friend; you are proper yourself. I could do it, couldn't I? Better than that Miss Gordon. She'd spoil everything! You must make him let me. I'll go mad if I don't; they're all going ahead, beating me. O Gib, I'll work hard. You'll ask him, won't you? He can't refuse you—can he?"

Gilbert, under the influence of her strong personal force, had positively to command himself to reply steadily, "I can't possibly open the subject with your husband, Valentine."

"Answer me one question." She came up close beside him, laid a hand on his chair, and looked down into his face with her glittering gray eyes. "If I could come, would you engage me?"

Gilbert looked up. He knew what he ought to say; but that face in its superb intensity and picturesqueness, the eyes flashing with intelligence and fire, the whole individuality of the girl so exactly what he had long sought for—these attacked him and his sympathies upon their weakest quarter—the quarter of ambition. He had liked the idea of Miss Gordon as little as Valentine herself, while the thought of this material and his own power to develop it thrilled into his face.

She read his assent instantly, drew away, and with a series of rapid, concentrated movements settled her hat and pulled down her veil. In the doorway she turned. "Ophelia," she said, "I *must!*" and the door banged behind her.

Gilbert, full of anxiety and remorse, followed but could not overtake her.

CHAPTER XX

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

It was with a feeling of decided nervousness that Gilbert called the following afternoon at the Scotts', and with an indescribable relief that he heard Mrs. Scott had just gone out. He had feared he knew not what of Valentine in her wave of tumultuous excitement. But she had gone back to her husband after all, and as he walked along he decided he must see more of her in the future. And Dick—he must keep Dick by him until the hoped-for editorship was an accomplished fact, and the boy had plenty to do.

The afternoon was rainy, and when in this mood he called at the Cushings', he found Philippa at home and alone. This was such an unlooked-for gladness that the actor's face as he came into the library was very bright.

Philippa stretched out her hand, and looked up at him from the depths of her chair with a tired smile. She had a book in her lap, but her head lay back in rather a listless fashion.

"I hope you're not overtiring yourself?" Gilbert asked in a tone of some concern as he drew up a chair.

"I think not." She shifted her position. "I'm so glad you came. I want to be taken out of my thoughts."

He looked at her keenly. "Is life so complicated here in New York as it was in the summer?"

"I—suppose so." Philippa's tone was one of dis-

tinct discouragement and depression. Gilbert waited until her eyes, wandering about the room, returned and rested on his face; then he asked very gently, "Mayn't I hear?"

"Mr. Carne, it's about Dick." Her manner was hesitating, but there was relief in her face. "I'm so vexed—and bothered! Aunt Sue is crying upstairs in her room"—Philippa's own voice sounded as though she would like to follow suit—"and we don't know what to do."

"Gossip, I suppose," Gilbert said.

"Yes. Somebody talked to Aunt Sue yesterday—she came home so upset. It's about——"

"I know."

"Is it really true, Mr. Carne, do you think? I've been hoping it was just talk. Is he with her so much?"

Gilbert began to pace the room thoughtfully. "It's almost impossible for me to answer, Miss Cushing. I fear it is. The worst of it is, it's all so natural. Think of her life—think of what Scott is, and Dick."

"You are not reassuring."

"I'm afraid the facts are not."

"Ah, but you could do something!" cried Philippa, with that note of sympathetic confidence in him guiding her remark, as it had often done in the summer.

He stopped and looked seriously down on her. "What makes you think I could?"

"Because you can. You're the only person who always tries."

"Many people," said Gilbert slowly, "would call me an unwarrantable meddler in other folks' business."

"Ah, but they don't know." Philippa laid back her head and looked up at him with a touch of

pride in the words. In this mood of depression and reaction she seemed to recover him again. "Other people are dumb and numb—they are so afraid of interfering. You are the one person who doesn't let slip the opportunity to help. You're different, Mr. Carne. Yes"—as he made a gesture of denial—"it is true. So few care—so few help, and help consciously and deliberately. But you *always understand*. That's why I am sure you can do something here and save Dick."

She stopped with a sigh. Love had flashed from Gilbert's eyes as she spoke, but it was gone again. He gave himself a moment, and recommenced his pacing. A cluster of thoughts soared up into his mind, opened like rocket stars, shone and disappeared. Was he really wise to wait and say nothing? Yes. While this doubt remained he knew he was.

He took the chair near her again. "You are right. There is something I could do"—he spoke steadily and gravely—"but it is a very serious step, and one I hesitate to take. I mean," he continued, answering her look, "if I could manage to get Valentine absorbed in work of some kind."

"Acting, you mean?" It was hardly what Philippa had expected, and her question was surprised.

"Let me explain. Valentine, Miss Cushing, is a wonderful nervous organism with an abundance of intensity and talent. She is a born actress, and the being cut off from her natural work and growth is largely responsible for this restlessness. I wonder if I make myself clear when I say that she is more actress than anything else—and ambition beating the bars. She's about as well fitted for marriage with Scott as a humming bird to be harnessed with an elephant. But if I could get hold of her"—Gilbert's voice showed his eagerness and conviction—"and start her at work of a really high order—along with me and the training I've

had—and appeal to her brains, and wake up her mind, and satisfy and stimulate her artistic feeling, then I could absorb and save her; for a woman of Valentine's character is either saved by her intellect or damned by her emotions."

"You would engage her as your leading woman?" said Philippa in a voice faintly dissatisfied.

"Yes; but realize what that means and why I hesitate. Scott would, of course, never consent. He would have a separation, and be my enemy for life. And the world, too, would not be without a condemnatory judgment."

"I think," said Philippa sedately, "that you do well to hesitate. That's a very serious thing to do—separate husband and wife."

"In my opinion," Gilbert rose restlessly again, "I'd serve the interests of morality better to separate this pair."

She looked at him reproachfully. "I don't like to hear you say such things, Mr. Carne," she said with her little air of dignified rebuke. "It seems to me it would be better to talk to Dick."

"What am I to say to him, Miss Cushing? I see his mind as I see you there before me. He is regarding himself as a sort of latter-day Shelley with a dash of Tristram. To his own mind he is being rushed to ruin by an irresistible current. He's doing a lot of poetry under this influence, and most of it is very bad. And this Maynard and the rest——" He paused, and she saw pained lines around his mouth. "How to reach him!" he exclaimed.

"His mother feels so dreadfully. Can't you appeal to that?"

Carne shook his head. "I've tried that already. He will sentimentalize over her tears perhaps, but end by reflecting that they are the price of genius. Oh, why describe it! I only sound to you harsh and

heartless. I'm not—really. It's the old story of sensation for sensation's sake."

"I certainly think he ought to be more considerate of *me*!" said Philippa indignantly. "As Mrs. Bentley says, it is most careless of him. My guest, too!"

"But how can it affect you?" Carne asked. She looked at him with surprise.

"Certainly it affects me, Mr. Carne. A girl in my position oughtn't to have this gossip connected with her in any way. People dislike these things. Dick ought to remember that," said Philippa, with an air *à la* Bentley which jarred on her companion.

"The other is the only way," said he, rising.

"I should be very careful how I got myself mixed up in a scandal of that kind," she told him distantly.

Gilbert looked away. They had begun the conversation so sympathetically, so easily, and here was a blank wall again! "Even if it would help, Miss Cushing?"

"But people would say all sorts of things about you."

"Very probably."

"But is she really worth it?"

"I think so."

"Well," said Philippa reluctantly; then she smiled. "You're an obstinate creature," she said, shaking hands with him, "but—you'll keep Dick away, won't you?" she added more earnestly.

"I'll do my best." The smile she gave him at the end nearly obliterated the effect of the conversation on Gilbert; nearly, but not quite. As for Philippa, she went upstairs thinking, "He doesn't seem to realize in the least how unpleasant it all is for *me*."

It was then about five o'clock of a wet April day. At the very moment when Gilbert hurried from the

Cushings' house, Dick and Valentine Scott entered the Scotts' together. They had spent the afternoon at the Metropolitan Art Museum.

Before it came on to rain they had walked in some of those twisted alleys of the Park, admiring and rejoicing in the thin veil of green which betokened the coming of spring. Then, as the drops began, they had raced for the Museum door, and reached it panting. Here they lost themselves, lingering here and there over some bit of sculpture, some painting that Dick perhaps admired, or some bit of iridescent Phœnician glass which caught Valentine's eye. They had wandered in and out among the cases of china, bibelots, laces, always full of interest—always talking, talking.

Scott, as usual, was working at the Columbia Library, and expected to dine with a professor friend, and not to return till late. The house was absolutely quiet when the two came back.

"You're coming in?" Valentine asked Dick as she opened the front door.

"If I may spend another half hour with you." She nodded as she caught sight of a card on the tray. "Gilbert has been here," said she; then, lifting the card, began to laugh. "Poor Gib! He was frightened. I guess he thought I wasn't going home at all. I went to see him yesterday," she explained to Dick as they entered the parlour, "to see if he'd have me to do his Ophelia next season."

"And would he?" Dick asked eagerly.

"Yes, if *he*"—she raised her eyebrows—"let me do it. I asked him to beg for me, but he wouldn't. Gilbert's far too good," she ended, with a touch of bitterness. Dick ground his teeth.

"You ought to do it. It's a shame—a shame!" he cried, excited. "I feel like shouting his tyranny in the street!"

"Oh, hush-sh!" begged Valentine. "Somebody will hear." Dick looked at her wretchedly.

"Never mind, Mr. Cushing," she answered him, with that indescribable lift of head and hand which brought out her striking grace. "It isn't so bad as that, and I'm tired thinking about it."

They moved together toward one of the big sofas and sat down side by side. Dick, leaning forward with his head on his hand, looked into her face.

"Read me something. There's Keats, you were reading yesterday," said Valentine softly in reply. "Let's forget a little."

He rose obediently, got the book, and resumed his seat. The house was absolutely still. The rain pattered and gushed on the pavement outside, and the light that filled the room was the shining gray reflection from wet flagstones. Valentine had taken off her hat; her fair hair made a golden light about the head that rested against the dark sofa back. Her long hands lay in her lap; her eyes were turned toward him. He opened the book at random and began to read.

Dick had been for some time fully conscious of hidden fire. He had played with it, thinking, "Let me feed it with this straw—I can put it out in an instant!" or, "Let me grow warm from this delicious glow but once—I can extinguish it when I please!" This he had thought. But to-day, with the knowledge of her wretchedness, of his impotence, after the long afternoon walk, when it seemed as if their two minds played together, like two flames—thoughts like these were sliding farther and farther away. Dick read mechanically:

"Oh for a beaker full of the warm South!
Full of the true, the blushfull Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim
And purple-stained mouth,
That I might drink and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim."

He looked up. Her eyes were on him, wide open, full, tensely fixed on his; and the breath hardly stirred between her parted lips. He hurried on:

"Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou amongst the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the——"

His voice faltered, failed. He looked: the eyes seemed to draw his nearer, nearer, and the pale face of Valentine was vibrating like his own. He began to speak breathlessly: "Keats is a—great poet. I think in his richness of epithet—fulness of—I should say richness—*oh! what am I saying!*"

A pause fell. The beating of his own heart was shaking him to and fro. He pulled himself together, looked away, looked back, and went on in a rush: "He's always seemed to me greater than Shelley because of this richness of epithet. In Alastor—I mean in Lamia—this superb choice of—the richness of—of—O Val!—O God!—O Val!—O Val!"

They stood swaying together, without footing, in that strong rush of feeling. Her lips were to his sense of touch what music was to that of hearing. Shaken, drawing galloping breaths, repeating the same syllables monotonously over and over, Dick did not seem to hear, or see, or think. The fire in his veins, the giddiness in his head, the warm mouth on his own, the warm body in his arms—this was all—this, and the passionate response.

Then somehow or other he got out of the room and found himself in the street, without an umbrella, under the downpour of rain.

CHAPTER XXI

THE VOICE OF KURVENAL

GILBERT's season in New York was rapidly drawing to a close. The company had been unusually successful to have played so long; but now, though there had been a postponement of their tour more than once, the time had finally arrived when Gilbert had to face with regret the closing of his rooms and the temporary break-up of his steady interests and occupations. Still, he was not to go very far afield. The company was to play near and around New York: in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, New Haven, and the like, through May and into June, when a fortnight's engagement in Boston would terminate their season. Then was to come a holiday, to last till the end of August, when he returned to New York for September work and rehearsal.

Gilbert was particularly sorry to have to leave just at this time. "I wonder," he thought, as he walked toward the Cushings' one day during his last week in town, "if I couldn't get Dick to come with me under pretense of something—say play-writing?" He pondered on it as he walked along. He had carefully avoided Scotts' during the past week, and so knew nothing of what had happened. Mrs. Cushing met him in the hall.

"Gilbert dear," she said at sight of him, "I'm so glad! Dick's not at all well."

"What's the trouble?" he asked apprehensively.

"Oh, I think he's just bilious," declared Mrs. Cushing comfortably. "Certainly his father used to be—yellow like that, you know, and so cross. And Dick is never cross. They always used to say he looked like his father, but had my disposition. Only he ought to go away."

"I think so too," Gilbert agreed. "Where is he?"

"In his room, reading. And I know he could, Gilbert, for he got a good check yesterday, he told me."

"I'll talk to him;" and Gilbert started upstairs, while Mrs. Cushing, saying, "Yes, do," passed on her way to the pantry and lower regions.

Gilbert knocked on Dick's door, and in response to the "Damn it! Why can't they leave me alone?" said, "Can I come in, old man?"

There was a pause, then steps came across the floor, and Dick flung the door open, admitted his friend, banged and locked it behind him.

"Why didn't you say who it was before?" he remarked shortly, throwing himself down again upon the lounge beneath the window. Gilbert looked at him and saw at once that something had happened.

"Your mother tells me you're seedy," he remarked, dropping into a chair near by. Dick laughed grimly.

"You needn't tell *her*," he said in an offhand manner, "but I was out with Maynard and Forbes last night. And I *was* in a fix when I got back—couldn't find the stairs! I believe they took me up. This morning I suffer from the traditional and historical headache."

"H'm!" said Gilbert, and was silent.

"Mother doses me for biliousness," Dick went on, and laughed. Seated quietly in the chair, Gilbert was thinking. Dick's long, thin figure lay at length among the cushions. His face was white, and above the purple shadows his eyes shone feverishly. The skin of his temples seemed to be drawn back, so that the eyes

usurped the upper half of the face. The lids were red, too, and his hair was disordered. The boy was so plainly suffering as to make his little attempt at dare-deviltry pathetic. Dick twisted in the cushions and sighed. Gilbert knew that whatever Dick felt he must express sooner or later. Their eyes met and studied one another silently for a long time. Dick could not help reading in the sympathetic silence, the anxious look of his friend, that he had noticed something. So, after a long pause, he began almost involuntarily to talk. It was such a relief to talk!

"You see, Gib, I never realized—old boy, I'm in trouble—yes, that's it. One never watches these things, you know. But I care tremendously, and she does, too, I'm afraid. What are we to do?" He rolled over in the cushions. "O Gib!" he ended desperately, "it's cruel—cruel. That's the truth!" Dick's voice wavered a note, and Gilbert's hand patted him on the shoulder caressingly.

"You'll go away?" he suggested, after a pause. Dick made no answer. "You'll go away!" Gilbert repeated. "You won't make it harder—for her?"

"Confound you!" Dick cried shrilly; "how do I know?"

"Say the word, Dicky, and I close the subject."

Dick turned so as to face his friend. "No, Gib," he said, "I want to talk it over with you. I don't—I don't know what to do."

"I'm very, very sorry, old fellow," said Gilbert steadily. "It's a hard row to hoe."

"You've lots to learn, my boy," Dick rejoined half dreamily. "You overvalue our strength in this world. We're thistle down, Gib—mere thistle down."

Gilbert shook his head. "Dick, if we're to talk of it, we're to talk about it *plainly*. Don't let's deceive ourselves, or call it by any other name, but look it square in the eyes. You've got to go away at once."

"It's easy enough to say." Dick sat up with flaming eyes. "If you had any idea of what you're talking about, you cold-blooded—vivisectionist! How should you know anything about such feeling?"

He subsided into the cushions again. "I know that there is one thing to be done, and no question whatever about it," said Gilbert steadfastly. "We can't shirk our responsibilities, you know."

"Responsibilities?"

"Yes, toward her. You have to think of her. She can't act; you must. You've got to be strong for both."

"But, my God!" cried Dick excitedly, "you seem to forget the necessity in this world for happiness and beauty. Why should we suffer—she and I—under the yoke of these monstrous conventions? It's too damned absurd!"

"Dicky," Gilbert said, "the conventions don't bother me much, you know. It's the other thing—the law of it, old fellow. You can't refine it, or explain it away, or shirk it, or make exceptions. I don't care what we think or believe, or how we differ in opinion—it's just one of those things that we can't get away from; it has its foundation in bed rock. It's one of the few duties there's no doubt about." He kept his hand affectionately on the other's shoulder.

"Wordsworth!" sneered Dick, shaking off the hand. "But, then, you're such a thorough Hebraist! Maynard said the other day that you had too much morality ever to be great."

"By that standard Maynard should be a Titan." Gilbert shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and muttered, "Ignorant nonsense."

"But I swear you are all wrong!" and Dick punched the pillows savagely.

"Then," Gilbert asked him, "why aren't you with her now?"

"What do you mean?"

"Because there is a doubt still in your mind," Gilbert finished firmly, "whether you have any right to bring trouble on her head, old boy."

Dick made no reply. His uncertain fire had flickered out as the old influence reasserted itself. Gilbert, leaning forward, looked at him with that expression of elder tenderness, and under the gaze it suddenly seemed as though Dick's combative energy dwindled and left him limp.

"I suppose you're right," he said, after a long pause. "If you only understood. Still you can't—it's not in your nature. If she were alone now—Gib, talk to me about something else; I'm tired."

"Promise me something, Dicky—no more Maynard and Forbes."

"Oh, there's not much pleasure in it," said Dick wearily. "It keeps me from thinking. But I promise, if you like."

Gilbert picked up a book and read aloud, keeping his voice deliberately low and monotonous. By and by Dick dropped asleep, and Gilbert slipped away.

But when he came back the next day, to see whether Dick had fixed on time and place, he found the same ground to be gone over again. Dick had changed his mind; it was easy to see he did not wish to make a decision. Apart from the fact of his going away, the subject was not reopened between the two. In truth, Dick, who was occupied in looking at life through his individual prism in order to enjoy the rainbows, was anxious to avoid taking a peep through Gilbert's plain glass. He tossed about, vowed that nothing should make him go, consented to start to-morrow, took it back and reconsented, while Gilbert waited, watched, and kept at the point, hoping by mere steadiness to guide his friend through this mood of excitement. All the while he was himself quick to feel a lively sym-

pathy. After all, here was Dick, here was Valentine—tinder and flame. Gilbert was not cold; he felt all that Dick could ask of a sense of fitness on the one hand, of injustice on the other. The difference lay in the fact that this insight and sympathy never shook his decision for an instant.

He watched Dick and noted how this temperament was fulfilling itself. At twenty-five Dick was very quick to note his own changes and phenomena. He was undergoing keen suffering, but below it, below the strong, physical emotion, there was also a consciousness of satisfaction and curiosity. For years he had been waiting, anticipating such a sensation—the harp-strings had been tuned to pitch, awaiting a musician's touch. He could not put away the ecstasy of pure feeling; it possessed him—he was greedy of it. He could not renounce the thought of Valentine—the woman for whom he had breathed so fast, for whom he had been stirred by the strangest revolt, at the touch of whose lips he had thrilled. However he might agree to Gilbert's proposition, there was always a part of him that did not consent, that looked forward, half daring, half afraid, that counted vaguely on having the decision snatched out of its hand by some turn of destiny. He could not go back to her in her husband's house; but should chance interpose, should accident throw the door open, he was not sure that he might not yield to a second rush of feeling like the first. Not that these things took any such definite form in his mind as this in which they have been written down; they were subtle influences, vague thoughts upon which Gilbert could not lay hand to combat, dark planets whose existence could only be induced. Meanwhile days passed, and Gilbert realized with dismay that his remaining time in New York was growing very short, and that Dick, left to himself, might never go away at all. In a guarded

way he had tried to enlist Mrs. Cushing, but had only partially succeeded. He cudgelled his brains, for he had but two days left. Then he went to see Philippa.

"I am going to ask you a favour," he began somewhat abruptly, fixing his eyes with all their fire upon her.

"Yes?" She took a chair, looking at him intently.

"Dick is ill, Miss Cushing. He needs a change, and he needs it at once. No, his condition is not serious"—for she had interrupted him with an exclamation of anxiety—"but you know he has never been robust; and the winter has told on him."

"I did not know," she rejoined; "but he is thinner. We must tell him to go away."

"I have tried, but he will not go; perhaps you can guess why. You know I leave on Sunday, and I shall not be content or easy unless I see him off."

Philippa sat silent. With the concern in her face there was also a shade of distaste. "But if he will not," she asked, "what can I do?"

"Have you not told me," said Gilbert, "that you own some land in the mountains of Tennessee, and that your manager there wrote you he suspected the presence of iron on it?"

"Yes. I got the letter last week."

"Then," Gilbert said, and his tone was half touched with command, "will you not help me, Miss Cushing? Will you ask Dick to go there, and inquire into this iron story for you? Put it so he can not refuse—women can do that. If you take him at a relaxed moment and urge it, and then take it for granted afterward, we will make him go."

"I understand," said she. "I will."

"There is one thing more." He rose, looking at his watch, for he was in great haste. "I think he may be trying hard for an editorship that will keep him here. Now, Dick has not the physique nor the temperament

for mere newspaper work or newspaper hours, and if he will not wait he will get nothing better. I want him to go at once, before there is a chance of it."

"You used to wish such a position for him, Mr. Carne."

"Never on a newspaper, Miss Cushing; and I want him to be in better health when he takes any. May I rely on you?"

"Yes," she replied, shaking hands with him. "I will do my best."

He hurried home and off to the theatre. He was busy dressing, when a scrap of paper was brought in to him in Blakeley's handwriting. He opened it, and ran his eyes down the few lines. It read:

"DEAR GIB: Did you know Val had left her husband? I met her to-day and she told me. There is a regular separation. She is living in a boarding house on E. 16th Street, just beyond Irving Place—I forget the number. I thought you would like to know.

"Yrs., N. B."

He had no time to consider this information; the thought simply lingered in his mind, as he made his way toward the wings, "He must go to-morrow."

Philippa made her request of her cousin that same evening at an opportune moment. Dick *had* been moving heaven and earth for a position, and to-day had received another refusal. On the way home he had lingered on the corner of the square near the Scotts', and looked, and looked, and looked toward the house. It remained dark and silent, and he had finally turned toward home, feeling utterly weary and beaten—all the exhilaration gone, and nothing left in his thoughts but bitterness and pain.

Gilbert had been right. In this tide of reaction Dick had taken hold of Philippa's proposal—without

enthusiasm, but as a sick mind seizes any prospect of change. He felt also he could not refuse her, and agreed to start early on Saturday. But when Gilbert arrived Friday morning, he found a number of good reasons why Dick should leave at once by the noon train. When the actor willed a thing very strongly, he was apt to carry his point. Before Dick realized it, his mother was packing his trunk, the cab was at the door, the trunk on it, and he and Gilbert were on their way to the station. Gilbert saw him to the ferry-boat. It was while they were waiting at the gate that Dick broke out fiercely: "If I only had money! If I were only my own master! Then you'd see if I would run to the ends of the earth on some rich girl's errand!"

"The mountain air will do you lots of good. There ought to be fine horses, too," was Gilbert's reply.

After a pause Dick said tremulously, "If you should see her, you'll let me hear——"

"Not a word, Dick!"

"Gib, you're hard!" Dick cried bitterly.

"No, I'm right. Take care of yourself, and good-bye, old man!"

CHAPTER XXII

DICK AND VALENTINE

DICK wrote his mother that the change was doing him good; that the mountain country was wonderful under the touch of spring; that it inspired him to many verses. His letters to Philippa dwelt entirely on the business side of his errand, about which, like many unpractical but literary people, he wrote with great clearness and particularity. To Gilbert his letters were shorter, mere statements of occupation, and in these he took no pains to conceal or disguise his depression of spirit. Gilbert was not made much easier in mind by Dick's departure. Sooner or later the boy would hear of the separation, and then all precautions might not avail. Meanwhile, Gilbert himself was waiting to hear from Valentine. He was a trifle surprised at her silence, and finally decided to take the initiative. It chanced that Granger had seen her in San Francisco, and was enthusiastic at the idea of securing such an attractive novelty for the New York public. "With that Ophelia," he declared, grinning, "we'll make 'em swallow even Hamlet!"

Dick had been South for three weeks. Gilbert was playing in Philadelphia in May, when he finally posted to Valentine his offer to be his leading woman for the coming season. She answered at once with a short note of acceptance, and he telegraphed Granger in New York to see her and make the final arrangements. The manager then ran over to Philadelphia to confer

with him and assure him that the affair was concluded. "And they say we're crazy," he declared, rubbing his hands, "to take that risk with anything but a favourite, but we'll show them!"

"By the way," Gilbert asked, "did she say what she was going to do in the summer?"

"Going off immediately into the country to study," Granger told him; and he felt a decided relief. In one of his letters to her about this time he had asked, very gently, for the reason why she had left her husband. Her answer was simple and direct: "I left because I couldn't stand it any longer. I went and told him that I must have my work again, and he was very angry. Then I said I thought I had better go, and I begged his pardon for being so much trouble to him, and giving him so much pain. I was really sorry, for I should never have married him. Ignorance is a dreadful thing, and I am not going to be ignorant about things any longer. He said I was unwomanly, and lots of other things, and I was very hurt and angry; but I remembered what you said and kept quiet. But they were not true, though he thinks so. Then I went upstairs and packed my trunks, and, coming down, I met him, and he was surprised I was going. He asked me to reflect, but I said I had, and that we were both unhappy, and it had better end. So I shook hands with him and said 'Good-bye,' and said I was very sorry again, but he did not understand. He looked so funny, Gib! So I'm staying here now." The characteristic ending made Gilbert smile in spite of himself. Once again she wrote: "O Gib, give me plenty to do, for it's awful being so lonely!" This note was received just at the end of his next-to-last week.

Three days later Gilbert in Philadelphia and Mrs. Cushing in New York received telegrams from Dick, announcing that he had started home. The despatch

to Gilbert expressed also a wish to talk with him, to which he responded promptly by telegraphing Dick his intention to run over to New York for the Sunday. He wrote a note arranging to meet and dine with Dick, and begging him to spend that night as his guest. Unfortunately, Gilbert could not get to New York before the late afternoon of Sunday, and Dick was expected to arrive on Friday night. However, what Granger had told him had set Gilbert more at ease.

Dick walked in upon his mother and Philippa, looking certainly browner and better than when he left a month before.

"But, darling, you startled us. Didn't he, Philippa? Telegrams always give me a shock, and you expected to stay; but it *has* done you good. What made you change your mind?"

"Business," Dick responded importantly, kissing her cheek. "It's a surprise, mammy. Guess what?"

"Not——" Philippa looked up quickly; he met her glance with a mock bow.

"Yes, madam. I've been offered the position of assistant literary editor on the Oracle."

The news produced all the effect Dick wished. Mrs. Cushing became simply incomprehensible from pride and delight, and Philippa asked eager questions.

"But, Dicky, I'm delighted! When did it happen? You never told us."

"Well," Dick explained, throwing himself back on the lounge, "it happened this way: About a month ago I asked them for something, but they were filled up and had nothing for me. Still, those men are my *friends*—fine chaps, every one of them—and the editor thinks a good deal of my contributions. Now, a week ago the man who has had the place was told by the doctor that he must go away—Europe, if possible—for a year or more. It broke him up awfully. They like

Tisdall in the office, so they made arrangements to send him off in July for some special articles. Then, you know, the last poem of mine was quite a success——”

“I know,” said Philippa. “Lots of people have talked of it, and your paper on Early French Songs too.”

“Well,” finished Dick, much gratified, “so they wrote and asked me; that’s all.”

“This is a great success,” his mother repeated—“a great success!”

“Well,” Dick replied with nonchalance, “the salary isn’t so much, but with what I’ve got it will do for the present.”

“What I’ve got” meant, of course, what his mother had—a little distinction she would have been the last to point out. She sat smiling and shaking her head with gratification, until an idea seemed to strike her. “Why, then you will have to be in town in the summer!” she remarked in tones of dismay.

“Yes, but you won’t,” replied Dick quickly.

“But, darling, if you are——”

“I’m just coming to that, mother.” He sat up and fixed her with his light eyes. “Even if you staid, I couldn’t be with you. I’m going to take rooms with Maynard and Forbes.”

“O Dick!” His mother’s disappointment was pitiful; the colour left her placid face, and her round eyes were full of trouble.

“Now, mother dear, listen!” He put his arm affectionately about her. “You don’t understand. In a year or two from now we’ll make a little home together—I shall work for that; but for the present it’s impossible. I couldn’t possibly subject you to my hours and ways. Besides, it’s essential that I should be right in with those men—don’t you see?” He kissed her tenderly.

"Aunt Sue will be with me," said Philippa, catching a vague impression of insincerity in these words of Dick's. Perhaps it was his nervousness—the sparkle of suppressed excitement in his eye.

"But nobody to look after you," Mrs. Cushing pleaded. "And what am I to do?"

Dick looked at Philippa. "Just what you intended, dear. Go on up to Maine with Phil and have a nice summer. Don't you think I'd feel happier knowing you were well?"

His mother clung to him and cried a little. Philippa moved away to the other side of the room, with a puzzled frown. She heard Dick say, in answer to some murmured question, "I'm afraid we must for the present. But never mind, mother dear; I'll make you proud of me."

There was a long silence. Mrs. Cushing sat with both arms around her boy, holding close the delicate head, the sensitive, high-strung face, to her own round, comfortable cheek. Her mind wandered back to the nights of his childhood—those when she went up to kiss him in his crib and would find him standing, all the covers tossed off, his cheeks bright pink, his eyes sparkling, the tuft of flaxen hair waving from his crown, his little feet as cold as ice! Restless imp of a baby he had been, most nervous of small boys, always affectionate, a joy and a terror. There came back to her also the many times when he had repeated those same words, "I'll make you proud of me some day," and had buried his hot forehead in her shoulder. The cheek she pressed to his was wet.

"It's only till the autumn," he consoled her. "I dare say we can manage it by then. Anyhow, we'll try. And who knows what may happen? Meanwhile, I may grow really famous. It isn't so long till the autumn, dear."

This aspect of affairs was undeniably more cheer-

ful, and Mrs. Cushing wiped her eyes. Dick led her tenderly from the room, and then shutting the door upon her, turned back and began to pace the floor with an absorbed face. Philippa stood watching him, undecided, hesitating. He seemed to have forgotten her presence.

"Dick——" she began; then stopped, uncertain. The girl's lack of sympathetic analysis showed here. She was conscious of something—an underlying mood in her cousin, but was unable to grasp or cope with it.

"Well, cousin mine"—he came rapidly toward her—"are you glad?" He was breathing fast.

"Of this editorship? Yes, indeed! But I'm sorry about your mother."

"Ah, yes"—he tossed his head as if to throw off the thought—"but she'll get used to it." He began to pace the floor again. "After I had waited so long, too—and just now—it's fate, Phil; that's what it is!"

She watched him, puzzled, with parted lips. His eyes glowed; there was a certain exaltation about his mood that affected her dimly.

"It makes me wonder," he went on, as if to himself, "if it isn't all Fate—blind, irresistible. Who can escape what is written?"

"Dick, have you told Mr. Carne?"

"Yes; he's coming over on Sunday. Good old Gilbert—as if he knew! What a slow pendulum he is, Phil, weighted with duty and law!" His voice rose scornfully, and then he suddenly laughed aloud. "As if *he* touched the heights and depths!"

Glancing up, he saw her curious eyes upon him, and at once spoke more quietly. The rest of the evening he was his winning, affectionate self, and left them early to do some writing. When Philippa went up to bed she saw his light still burning.

All day Saturday he was busy, apparently in the

Oracle office. He dined with Maynard and Forbes and went back with them to their rooms, where they sat late discussing ways and means. He came in late looking tired, and bringing word of their cordial acquiescence in the arrangement.

Sunday morning he seemed jarred and irritable, under a perceptible nervous strain. He remained in his room until noon, when he went out and returned for dinner with his nervous organism screwed to another twist. He ate scarcely anything, said little, and Philippa thought to herself, "If the last two days have worn him out, how is he ever going to stand the regular work?" She followed up this thought with a flash of complacency at her own powers of observation. After dinner Dick took his hat and suit case, for he was to spend the night at Gilbert's rooms, and left the house. His mind was in a state of siege that would not admit a thought or intuition. It resembled as nearly as anything the effort which one makes to banish thought and induce sleep—that concentrated pushing away and repellant of all distinct ideas.

He walked rapidly to the corner where he had watched in vain during two hours of the morning—the corner of East Sixteenth Street and Irving Place. Under a plausible pretext he checked the dress-suit case in the office of the Westminster Hotel. Thus unencumbered, the young man with a pale face began to pace the pavement between Sixteenth Street, Irving place, and Third Avenue.

These arrangements would seem to argue more intention in Dick's movements during the day than was actually the case. It was this absence of acknowledged purpose which had made his actions so swift and concentrated. He was like a man in a dream. At a certain point ahead in the future everything stopped. There was a fever in his veins, a tightness across his temples; his pulses throbbed to the one

thought: "Why not see her? I must see her! I *will* see her!"

As he walked the pavement there, that sunny Sunday afternoon in May, all the thought that he was conscious of was this monotonous repetition: "I must see her! I must see her!" The attention of his mind was, as it were, hypnotized by this one idea; an effort, stronger than Dick was capable of making, was needed to drag it off this intense desire and force it to face facts and consequences. Had Gilbert been there he might have commanded this effort, but Gilbert was quietly reading in a train some fifty miles away.

Through absence and change of air, Dick had gained decided physical tone, and in this new strength his longing for a sight of Valentine had leapt to an overmastering hunger. Unfortunately, he had not been long enough away for it to beat itself out against the bars. At this moment freedom and independence had fallen into his open hand. It would be wrong to say the boy made no resistance; he was caught up, possessed, and whirled away by a force which made resistance impossible to one of his temperament and weakness. With his twenty-five years, his excitability, his artistic nature, and, above all, his keen, acute delight in the experience of sensation, he was fit prey for a passion to which stronger than he have succumbed. He paced doggedly, steadily, up and down. The shadows changed and lengthened, the sunbeams grew yellower and disappeared behind the tall houses. People came back to their homes and went out again, casting little curious glances at him. The tension of waiting was beginning to tell upon him, and it grew to a keen discomfort, then to an agony. This was his last chance; to-morrow Gilbert would be there, and after that he must go away. He looked up, and saw her.

She was a block away, hurrying up Irving Place.

Her step would have betrayed her to him, if her figure had not. She was dressed all in gray and thickly veiled; she carried her head high. She moved with that peculiar swinging step of hers, which seemed a thing apart from mere muscular action. Dick stood stock-still on the corner and stared. He needed a moment to quiet that jump of the heart and that strong trembling. From the shelter of a nearby doorstep, just opposite the house to which he knew she must be returning, he watched her approach. Nearer and nearer she came, walking with a purpose. The joy that grew in him at sight of her swept everything before it. How could he raise a moral question—how could he think at all, being what he was? The tragedy of temperament cast its shadow upon these two children.

Val came nearer, Dick looked, and emotion swayed him. Does the man who feels his nerves stir at the sight or touch of a woman stop to reason about it—to analyze that moment of exquisite bewilderment? Words till now cold, facts till now shocking, stories till now startling, grew suddenly vivid, natural, possible. Valentine's husband? The words were meaningless. He shrank into the shadow of the stoop, as she turned the corner, crossed the street bias like a person in haste, and ran up the boarding-house steps. Then he followed swiftly, irresistibly, laid his foot upon the lower stone, and at the sound she turned. They stood looking into each other's eyes. Val made a little gesture of speechlessness. A footstep was heard inside the house.

"May I come in a moment?" Dick asked in a low voice. Before she could answer, the door was opened; Val entered mechanically, and he followed. A parlour to the left of the hall was hidden by heavy, double doors. Val opened one, and they came together, without speaking, into the cheerless, musty room. He

walked to the other end of it, while she shut the door behind them and leaned against its panels. The little sound of the closing door seemed to snap the tension. At the faint, broken cry from her, his eyes took fire. She put out her hands as he came. Then their arms were round each other. Dick kissed her frantically through the veil, then tore it off and kissed her lips.

"Oh, shall we suffer—shall we suffer any longer?" he cried to her. "Shall we? shall we?"

And Val, clinging to him, answered: "No, no, no! I can't stand it!"

Gilbert's train was late. It was after six o'clock when he reached his rooms and entered them gaily, expecting to find Dick ensconced in an armchair with a book. Finding no one, however, and supposing his friend would not turn up till the dinner hour, he seated himself to answer a few notes which were waiting. They took some time, and when they were done he glanced at his watch and found it was a quarter past seven. He was, however, used to Dick's unpunctuality; he did no more than sigh impatiently, and prepared to smoke and wait. Half an hour passed, when the electric bell at his door rang. He sprang up eagerly, but instead of Dick it was a messenger boy. The sight of the envelope and handwriting gave Gilbert a sudden, odd pang. While he was signing the book, he asked the boy which was his office, and was answered "The Grand Central Station."

The boy clattered down the stairs, and Gilbert tore open the note. He read:

"DEAR GIB: Val and I are together; she sends her love. Gib, it's the beginning of the world! Will you please tell my mother? Affectionately,

"R. W. C."

BOOK THIRD

CHAPTER XXIII

JOY

WHEN Dick asked Valentine where he should take her for his holiday, she replied without raising her head from his shoulder: "Oh, anywhere! Off into the woods!"

There came a day when all the long slopes of New Hampshire lay under a full June sun. On the horizon, blue mountain tops rose like billows crested with a foam of white cloud, and nearer lay the stretches of woodland in varying and delicate greens, which midsummer had not as yet blent into a blazing uniformity of tint. A road, wandering down from the hills, ran across the valley through rock-studded meadows, to climb farther hills; its course outlined to the eye by the stone walls and apple trees on either side. All these things—the white road, the indefinable tender colour of the apple leaves, the sprouting tangle of blackberry, and the patches of pure turf, emerald against the sombre hemlocks—vibrated in the noon-tide, not glaring, but with a luminous glow, each leaf transparent with clear light. Before one of the white cottages which straggled away from the high road, a man was at work weeding his garden behind a hedge of hollyhocks. Once, pausing to straighten his back and glance around him, he had noted a distant buggy moving across the valley in a little trail of white dust,

and had wondered momentarily who was coming from Peterboro' in the heat.

He bent again to his work, and did not notice the approach of the vehicle, as it crawled up the hills or jogged down them, nor the details which began to grow plainer above the rapidly moving legs of the old horse.

A very obstinate patch of chickweed absorbed him so completely that he did not hear the creak of the buggy wheels up the last slope, nor the "whoa!", which caused the horse to stop at his own gate. Then a voice called out to him: "Would you mind telling us——"

The voice was a man's, high-pitched and young; but it was not suffered to finish the request. Another broke in with, "No, no, Dickie—let me ask him!—Please, might we speak to you a moment?"

An odd richness and carrying quality in this voice, and a tremble of laughter in it, caused Mr. Twitchell to straighten up among his hollyhocks. Putting down his hoe, he moved mechanically toward the gate, his eyes widening as he drew near. Thick dust coated the buggy top and the flanks of the horse. The second circumstance noted by Mr. Twitchell was that the vehicle was loaded more than is usual. The feet of its two occupants were hidden behind shawl bundles and hand bags. A basket between them was suggestive of luncheon; the back section of the buggy was packed with pasteboard and wooden boxes, brown-paper bundles and bags, and a long roll, from which protruded the handle of a chafing dish. The young woman, who was smiling, held a handbox; the young man's pockets were sagging as he drove. Mr. Twitchell observed these indications with a dawning comprehension.

"Movin'?"

Ready laughter from both occupants of the buggy

showed a pleasant gaiety of heart. Then the young woman leaned forward across the driver to reply.

"Yes, but we don't know where we're moving to as yet. Do you happen to know if there are any cottages to rent around here?"

"Cottages?" Mr. Twitchell repeated helplessly. The irregularity of the proceeding deprived him of ideas, but the faces turned upon him glowed with the frankest good humour and smiling inquiry.

"We-ell," he replied slowly, as though anxious not to commit himself, "it don't come my way much to hear about 'em, if there are. They mought tell you up to the store, now. You don't want to go to the hotel?"

"Oh, *dear*, no!"

"We want a place to ourselves," explained the young man, speaking for the first time; "not the hotel nor any place of that kind. Just a little cottage, you know, somewhere in this neighbourhood, and high up, so we could see the mountain.—Like Shelley's at Keswick, Val," he added in an aside to his companion. She nodded, and they looked at each other as if with a quick remembering of joyousness. Mr. Twitchell glanced from the young man to the girl, and seemed to feel the influence of her smile. His face relaxed, he shifted his quid of tobacco, and thrust his hands more easily into his pockets.

"Weddin' trip?" he ventured. The girl, with her extraordinary eyes upon him, flashed him a little nod, and pursed her mouth. There was a short pause of readjustment, during which the young man looked mountainward with a slight frown.

"We-ell," repeated Mr. Twitchell, still thoughtfully, but dropping his noncommittal manner, "I mought know of something, now." He pulled his gray beard.

"Oh, *anything* will do," the girl said eagerly, "that is far off in the woods."

"If I knew just what you want——"

"We want," declared the young man in a tone of practical decision, "a small house or cabin or something, either in the woods or with a view. There ought to be a good spring near it—and it must be far away from everybody."

"Now there's Mr. Gunning's shootin' hut up on the mountain?" queried Mr. Twitchell with an inspiration. "It has a spring near—and it's the darn lonesomest place I know of."

"That's it!" both cried aloud; and Val added, "I knew you'd think of something!"

"But, hold on; it's the worst old stove——"

"Stove! If we can see those hills!"

"Well, I see 'em all the time, and they don't fill my stomach much," declared Mr. Twitchell with conviction; then he glanced back at his garden bed. "You go right along now up to the hotel and get your dinner, and I'll see what I can do for you just as soon as I finish my weedin'," he added, with a total change of manner from the indifferent to the paternal.

"But we want to see it——"

Mr. Twitchell moved off. "I'll come right up to the hotel soon's I'm done," he remarked over his shoulder, as he took up his hoe. There was nothing left for Dick to do but glance at Val with a laugh, and pick up the reins.

"I tell you, dear, we're in that old codger's hands now, for better, for worse," he said, as they moved off.

In Mr. Twitchell's hands they certainly were, and events proved it a fortunate circumstance. It was not long after they had finished their dinner in the comfortable little hotel when they saw him coming, with a small boy and a wheelbarrow. Discussion of ways and means followed, with the result that an hour later an unique procession climbed the steep pathway between white birch trunks. The order of their going

was: First, Mr. Twitchell's grandson with two bundles; second, friend of Mr. Twitchell's grandson with another bundle, at which he smelt furtively from time to time; third, conscientious dog, belonging to Mr. Twitchell's grandson's friend; fourth, Val, carrying the chafing dish and a sofa cushion in Armenian embroidery which she had insisted on buying at the hotel; fifth, Mr. Twitchell with a wheelbarrow of household gods; sixth, subordinate from the hotel, with a stovepipe; lastly, Dick, carrying a bottle, a basket, and a bag of books.

When reached, the hut turned out to be the full realization of their utmost hopes. It was a good-sized log cabin with a loft, and windows facing the west. It stood upon a grassy slope which formed a sort of natural terrace on the mountain side. Below it, the ground dropped away steeply into a thick wood; above, the grassy slope ran soon into stretches of granite and low, crisp mountain herbage. Higher still, the mountain peak rose, steep and rocky, into the sky. The lake lay at their feet, with here and there a summer house on its borders, and the western horizon was all a rolling sweep, a petrified sea of purple hills. The delight of Dick and Val was exclamatory, as they flitted about. Meanwhile, Mr. Twitchell and his assistants proceeded to get things in order to such good purpose, that by the time evening came a fire had been started and the place was really habitable.

"I guess you're about fixed now," Mr. Twitchell said genially to Dick. "I must be gettin' back to supper myself. You're pretty comfortable, ain't you?"

"Yes, indeed!" Dick had a feeling that his month's salary was too little to offer for these services. "But what do I owe you? We've taken a good deal of your time," he added, feeling in his pockets.

Mr. Twitchell hesitated a long time. "I don't want to ask mor'n it's worth," he said tentatively, and

hesitated again. Finally he said, "About fifty cents," in the manner of a desperado, and Dick paid him with a gasp.

"I'll send Bobby with some milk in the morning," went on Mr. Twitchell, moving toward the path, "and would Mis' Cushing like some nice chickens this week—think?"

Dick was a moment in understanding, and his face flamed as he assented. "Hain't got used to it yet?" said the old man genially, and he departed down the pathway. Dick turned slowly back to the hut with a half frown, feeling let down from his high spirits, and Val noticed it from where she stood leaning against the door. Her face lighted exquisitely with inward fire as he came up.

"What did he say to make you look like that?" she asked swiftly, laying her hand on his arm. He told her, and for a moment she did not reply. They stood together, watching the light quiver and fade in the western sky and the hills turn soft indigo and umber. When she finally turned her face up toward his quickly, it wore an expression to which there was but one answer; and the moment of reaction was swept away, overpowered by the strong current of joy.

They remained in the woods for a long month of active happiness—active as hunger. Yet the past should have shadowed them; the sky, however brilliant, should have had its cloud. But in this pair neither the moral sense nor the sense of social disapproval existed to any high degree. They were both under twenty-five, both talented, artistic, and high strung, and one of them was a passionate woman. There was present in their relation from the first the inevitability of temperamental fitness for one another, which bound them more closely together than any merely emotional feeling, and gave their connection an enduring quality. After the first six months, there was born in the soul of

each that deep conviction of the durability of their sympathy which is the essence of true marriage. In age, in temperament, and in ambition, they were fitted for the normal wedded existence of man and woman, and in this distorted substitute the two held unconsciously, pathetically, to the ideal. Neither was lawless by nature, although Valentine was led by emotion, Dick by sensation. The effect of each on the other was for the most part good; each called out what was best in the other because the keynote of each was naturalness. Unfortunately for both, their life did not concern themselves alone, and the forces which it set in motion against them were subtly calculated to neutralize any improvement which they might stimulate in each other.

Meanwhile, the past troubled them very little. Valentine was not wholly in the wrong when she cried passionately: "O Dick, it wasn't our fault! We would have got married like everybody else if we could!"

And when Dick replied, "We will yet," he meant it with all his heart. For women like Valentine are rare, and her ascendancy over her lover was rapid and complete.

Such speeches, however, were uttered but seldom. They were in the woods, they were young, they loved; and the checkered light and shade rarely played on happier creatures. Each enjoyed to the full the beauty of their surroundings; each was sensitive to the warm glory of dawn and the radiance of sunset, to the play of shadows on the hills, the veiling of their crests in cloud, and the falling of light summer rain. Each was content to see the face of civilization no oftener than once or twice a week. The manner of their existence was more comfortable than might have been imagined, for Valentine, like many women of her talents, added to them a high degree of manual dex-

terity. She was one of those people who can do anything. Such women, when they wish, can make better omelets and take finer stitches than their less talented sisters, although these are slow to admit it.

After her year of suppression the girl fairly scintillated with happy activity. But she differed from Dick in that with her it turned at once into creative channels. Shakespeare was rarely out of her hand during this month, and the woods around often vibrated to her voice. But she was conscious as she proceeded that there was much she did not understand, much that Dick could not explain. She would come with the book in her hand to where Dick sat reading, slip down beside him, and, laying her exquisite head on his knee, look up and ask, puzzled and plaintive: "Dickie, even if Ophelia were mad, why should she say such things as 'Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!'—I mean what was in her head? It says, you know, she 'speaks things in doubt that carry but half sense,' but I don't see it."

And Dick would reply, "Oh, silly little girl! how should I know? She was mad, that's all. Come, let's take a walk."

Beyond the little occasional lyric which came so easily, Dick had done nothing for a long time. He had meant to start that famous play which was to revive the literary traditions of the stage and inaugurate a new era in dramatic writing, and he had filled his trunk with material and notes. But there was the mountain side to scramble over, the wood to dream in, Val within sight and touch. He would sit himself down determinedly to work with book and paper; but his glance would wander to where she sat, and hers would meet it. Then his notebook would slip to the floor, and he would go over and put his arm around her, and look down into her eyes. "Dearest! My be-

loved!" In whispers like these the mood of inspiration would evaporate.

Val herself, devoted as she was, never did this. When she was set down to reading or study, she became so concentrated that her eyes when he interrupted her were blank, and it took many caresses to rouse her from her thought. She became, as it were, another person—older, more thoughtful, stronger. Yet there was no doubt that Dick led. She had had but a meagre education. His knowledge, his taste, his training, were all superior, and her acknowledgment and pride in this were a most delicious flattery.

"You don't know about this, do you, Val?" he said with the least touch of boyish patronage.

"No," she sighed, "I don't. You're so wonderful, dear!" And she looked at him with great eager eyes.

In her superb health and energy Val was at this time an extraordinary figure. She possessed that one rare accompaniment to nervous intensity, physical force. She was far more robust in appearance and reality than the slender, fragile-looking Dick, and presented a far greater resistance to mental and physical fatigue. To this inherent healthfulness combined with keen sensibilities and rich imagination, was due the impression of genius which she created, and not to an intellectual development, which she did not possess. To see her treading the forest paths with her long, waltzlike step, the plait of hair lying over her shoulders like a sheaf of ripe wheat; to watch the astonishing grace of her supple body, bending this way or that, the smile flashed over her shoulder at him—these were to Dick an absolute wonder, a continuous delight. She was very tall, with a large head and large hands and feet; she bade fair to be a woman of commanding presence. What wonder, that although her mind lay fallow, that although Dick was her mental superior in every direction save one, his vanity was

conscious at times of a misgiving that nothing was impossible to her youth and vigour? For in the untilled garden of her mind Dick found the rarest plants springing at will, and the most fragrant blossoms, such as he knew how to value. And daily there grew in him a consciousness of the inherent strength which met and upheld the reactions of his own sensitive temperament—reactions which, had she met them in any other way, would inevitably, sooner or later, have ended their connection. At the moment, the joy of life filled them both to the brim; they lived in the present, as the young should live, cherishing each delight, quick to feel, strong to retain the feeling, whether it was the glow of sunlight, the touch of mind, their response to poetry and literature, or their passion for each other.

Dick came up the mountain path with a handful of letters from the post office in the village. The day had been warm, and the sunset poured a red glow over hill and valley. Dick was panting a little from the climb, and paused to recover breath so soon as he emerged from the belt of pines upon the smooth grassy space where the hut was placed. A fresh little breeze was playing along the mountain side, and Dick turned his heated brow gratefully to it. The long line of rounded hilltops lay beneath him, like a purple sea. He looked about for Val, and soon caught sight of her white frock where she lay among the dried grasses on the slope, a hundred feet above where he stood. He clapped his hands to his mouth, and called, "Hillo-illo-illo!" and waved the batch of letters when she looked. He saw her spring to her feet, pick up her skirt, and start to run down toward him over the grassy space. She was sure-footed on the slope, as an animal. Dick watched her coming. She faced the sunset, and the glow was on her face and hair. As she drew near she extended her arms, and the ruffles of

her dress made little swirls about her feet. He planted himself firmly, and held open his arms to receive her; she fell into them breathlessly, and they kissed, and laughed, and kissed again. Then Dick put his arm about her and they walked to the platform of the hut, where they sat down to their letters. Val had only one—in Gilbert's handwriting—and she let it lie unopened on her knee until Dick should have read his. As he ran his eye down the first the happiness of his face clouded a little.

"Val," he said, folding it, "our holiday is over."

"Oh, dear me!" said Val, and put her head on his shoulder.

"We must go back the day after to-morrow."

"O Dick, so soon?"

"Yes. They write me that I must come to my work at once. Tisdall sails to-morrow, and they need me. There's no help for it. What does Gilbert say?"

"You open it," said Val dejectedly, and he did so.

"It's about Ophelia chiefly, of course; and about your working and studying, and a list of books for you—the usual thing." He let the letter slip to the ground, drew Valentine closer, and laid his cheek against hers. Both of them looked out over the hills, which were fast turning gray. "Oh, my God, Val," said Dick in a low voice, "we have been happy here!" She made no reply in words.

They hurried their supper inside the hut, so as to make the most of every moment out of doors. The night had fallen much cooler after the heat of the day, so Dick built a little camp fire, that glowed like an eye out of the dusk. They sat beside it, wrapped in one cloak, and watched the stars tremble out, one by one, overhead. Val looked up and quoted: "'Look how the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold!' They do stay there so unchangeably, always going round and round—what makes them?"

"Eternal law, beloved."

"Like law here, you mean?"

"Better, I hope."

"Don't laugh, Dickie; I don't understand. I know they're worlds, but what makes them always do the right thing in the right place? Laws don't make people do that down on the earth. Some of them don't—like *us*."

"Don't, Val."

"O Dickie, I'm so happy, but I don't understand. The stars seem to have a reason—do you suppose that is what they call God?"

"I suppose so, dearest. I don't know. I love you." His voice trembled into silence, and she rested her head back against him. The touch thrilled him; she was so alive. By and by she sighed, and the pressure of the arm around her asked her why.

"I would like to know about—everything."

"Ophelia didn't know about the stars," said Dick, half laughing; "and it would only make you unhappy."

"But why?" She shifted her head and spoke earnestly. "I should think the more one knew the more——"

"Dear," he interrupted her imploringly, "this is our last quiet time here!"

This eager streak in her to learn, to know, jarred on his mood; he wanted her merely to feel. So they sat quiet, listening to the night sounds in the woods, drinking in the spicy odours which the wind brought, and watching the sparks of the camp fire rise up in the smoke overhead.

CHAPTER XXIV

AMBITION

THEY came back to New York and plunged at once into a very different kind of life. Questions of money gave them little concern. Dick had his salary, and occasional checks for poems and essays; Valentine would soon have her salary, and at present was still drawing alimony from her husband. They had even saved a little during the month in the woods. And, to cap the climax, Dick had come into a legacy of a thousand or two. So they took a house on West End Avenue; one of those pretty little houses with a square entrance hall and drawing room and dining room on the second floor. Valentine took a hansom for three mornings and dashed delightedly from shop to shop purchasing this or that, until the little house was filled from garret to cellar with a bizarre collection of furnishings from McHugh's and Vantine's, mingled with what the salesman told Valentine was Louis Quinze. These purchases added to the house rent, amounted to considerably more than their year's income, but this circumstance troubled them very little. Most of their friends were similarly placed; and what wonder, when no arrangement was regarded as permanent in this camp of a city? For the present, life was agreeable and did not cost more than twice their means, and then Dick was a genius, as Valentine often seriously assured him.

Unfortunately for Dick, he began his work at the Oracle office under several disadvantages. The story

which had preceded him was one of these, inasmuch as it divided him in sympathy from the three or four men on the paper who were really worth while. The Oracle was not only a clever and amusing weekly sheet, but the only one of its kind to make any attempt at independent criticism. Undoubtedly its attitude of brilliant impertinence had brought it prominently into notice, but many read it for its more solid qualities, and there were men upon its staff who did thoughtful and individual literary work. Dick would have benefited by the friendship of these, but the story, Valentine's youth, and, above all, Dick's own attitude in the matter, distinctly antagonized this better element, and thus brought him into closer contact with other men on the paper who did him no good.

Dick, of course, arrived in the office with "views" best adapted to preserve his peace of mind. By the use of several positive statements and some classic catchwords, he succeeded in getting a set of dogmas into working order. These provided for the "right of individual freedom," and accounted for failures and discrepancies by "the deplorable utilitarianism of the times." Dick vividly harangued the office on this doctrine, and found his adherents in the lower element, who listened, however, with tongue in cheek. Forsyth, the editor in chief, a man of considerable dignity in the literary world and the author of some solid work, had rather liked "young Cushing." On one of the occasions when Dick was displaying his pyrotechnics, the elder man suggested a few points, such as that great men have worked hard under disadvantages, that character influences production, and that if the times press hard, the weaker go to the wall. But Dick fluttered over these truisms with wit and vivid metaphor, and Forsyth held his peace, and made his estimate. "Young Cushing," he told a friend, "is a talented boy, but he is as fresh as green

paint. He is trying to make capital out of his affair with that young girl he eloped with, who was decent enough until she met him—poor child!”

This was harsh, but it contained a measure of truth. Undoubtedly, Dick had expected to stand among his comrades for something large and daring, to be noted in their world. He bore an attitude of experience, and hinted at forces undreamed of by lesser men; and it thrilled him to watch himself through their eyes, the hero of this passionate romance. Unfortunately, this slightly Byronic attitude disgusted the better element, and the social Dick was thrown among a class which, as he wrote Gilbert, was “thoroughly emancipated.” Thorough emancipation and nothing else is not the most elevating atmosphere in the world, and through force of circumstances, Dick and Valentine drifted into an exceedingly vulgar society. Even Val wondered that Dick was content with the loud-voiced, gaudily dressed women of their set, the heavy-cheeked, bold-eyed men who ordered champagne for luncheon and did not know his verses from any others. In his heart of hearts Dick was far from content; he was both disappointed and mortified at having failed to create the impression he had expected; he was keenly sensitive to an aloofness in the men whom he respected and admired, and he tried to dignify noisy vulgarity by his imagination. To Val herself the life was more familiar, but had no especial charm. She went along with it as Dick did, wore the clothes his friends admired, accepted their presents and their suppers. She was young and pleasure loving, and liked to do what Dick required of her, but she wondered sometimes at his nervous desire to be always busy at some amusement. “That man doesn’t care a bit about your poetry,” she would say; and Dick would answer easily, “Perhaps; but he’s an awfully good fellow.”

August was spent by them in perpetual expeditions out of town, restaurant dinners, and amusements variously noisy. Then, as the time crept on, and Gilbert's letters reminded her of the coming work, Val withdrew herself a little. She did not really care much about it all, and would send Dick without her. Coming back with boisterous comrades, he would find her dreaming.

"What is it, Val?" he asked gaily.

She lifted her head and answered musingly, "I don't know."

"Come down and make us a mint julep. The fellows are thirsty," Dick coaxed. She hesitated, then slipped an arm about his neck and looked up at him. "Do you like those men so much, Dickie? I don't."

"Oh, they're all right. Come, Val."

So Val went and made the mint julep and drank of it, and her laughter was hearty and shrill. Every circumstance in the girl's life was tending to blunt that sensitiveness upon which Gilbert relied. A letter from Dick about this time suggested the probability to Gilbert himself.

He had not failed to be keenly sensitive to the blow which had fallen upon his old friend Mrs. Cushing. It had been worse because of its total incomprehensibility to her, both from Dick's attitude toward it and her own. To her incoherent and imploring letters her son had written answers, at first gentle and evasive, with a certain air of affectionate tolerance which bewildered the poor woman. Later on, his letters flung off any shade of regret and displayed in every phase the exhilaration of strong happiness. His mother, reading them through her slow-dropping tears, ~~and~~ went a sense of utter bewilderment, so changed did he seem to be.

"And, oh, Gilbert," she would cry over and over again, "he doesn't seem to understand what he's doing

at all! How can I make him understand? My boy! Would you send the rector to talk to him?"

"I think I wouldn't do that, Mother Cushing," Gilbert would reply patiently.

Mrs. Cushing had refused point-blank to go up to Maine with Philippa. She had the longing to take her grief to her own place.

"You are very kind, dearie," she replied to the girl's constant urging; "you're very good, indeed, I know, but I want to go home, my dear."

She wanted the familiar walls around her, the familiar river at the door. She wanted to hear Mary in the kitchen once again, and to be surrounded by the rooms and objects which belonged to the peaceful years of her life. She had been one of those tranquil souls from whom old age holds off; but after this blow he seemed to spring upon her. She developed new obstinacies and crotchets; and, above all, dislike of change or movement. So Gilbert in the first fortnight of his holiday took her to Bishopton, and spent a few days with her there. When he left her finally, it was to the indignant pity and warm interest of half a dozen old friends. Thus surrounded, comforted, and ministered to by the affection which her kindly life had inspired in her neighbours, she sank into a sort of apathy, which was the nearest approach she was ever likely to attain to her old serenity. The tiny details of life and her own wandering attention prevented too much brooding on her disappointment, and Gilbert realized that a nature like hers is capable of at least partial adaptation to almost any condition. He then went up to the Adirondacks, where he spent six weeks, and it was there that he received Dick's letter.

During the first week of his return to town he dropped in on his friend at the Oracle office. Dick gave Gilbert a hearty if somewhat boisterous welcome.

"Well!" he declared, swinging round in his chair

as Gilbert took a seat. "You're looking pretty fit for the campaign. How do you feel, Gib—nervous?"

"Not very," replied Gilbert. "How's Valentine?"

"Val's all right," Dick rattled on; "she has lots of questions to ask you. There isn't a nerve in her body," he added with pride; "and she's been digging hard enough to please even you."

Gilbert said he was glad to hear it.

"When will you come and see us? Maynard brings some fellows to-morrow night. Val makes a delicious punch. Why don't you come? You can talk to her about Ophelia."

"I'm afraid that would hardly be a good opportunity," said Gilbert, smiling. "No, I think I had better choose some time when she is alone."

"Come anyhow, Gib; it will do you good. You work too hard, and need brightening up."

"I'm afraid I'd be dull company," said Gilbert. "Thanks, Dickie, but I really haven't a minute, day or evening."

"Well, suit yourself," said Dick, yawning; "you always were unsocial."

The other smiled a little bitterly. When he remembered the past, this glib assumption hurt him. But Dick was in a jarred mood this morning, it was easy to see. Gilbert was worried to note how the young man's appearance of nervous fragility had increased. They were talking of indifferent things when Maynard lounged into the room. When he saw the person whom he called "that affected creature Carne" he gave him a brief nod, without removing his pipe. Then he went over to Dick and whispered in his ear, and they laughed together. Gilbert, who sat by, was conscious of deliberately struggling for a greater sympathy of manner. This was Dick's friend—he knew he must lay aside this appearance of distaste, which to them must seem like an intolerable priggish-

ness and stiffness. Undoubtedly, Gilbert tended to fall into his old error of intolerance, which so constantly defeated his own ends. By and bye Maynard turned to him. "We're expecting a good deal of you, Carne," he said; "are you going to send the office good places?"

"I'll see they are sent, anyhow," Gilbert answered.

"What in the world ever made you choose Hamlet? Shakespeare's dead as a doornail."

"Oh, mere whim!" said Gilbert. "Of course, if there had been a really good modern play forthcoming——" His voice had not the slightest sarcastic inflection.

"Now I leave it to Cushing," said Maynard with his authoritative manner, "what on earth's a fellow to say about Hamlet? They will detail me to your first night, I suppose, and Lord knows what copy I shall send in. The general impression is, Carne," he added, "that you're making a big mistake."

"Well," Gilbert said, "time will show. The Oracle won't let me remain under a false impression, I fancy."

Maynard grinned, and said he fancied not. Then he went back into his own room and shut the door.

"What I stopped in for," Gilbert went on to Dick, "was to ask about that play."

"I've begun it," Dick said hastily.

"Of course I have cards up my sleeve to follow Hamlet, but if you can get it into shape by Christmas, Dick, we'll talk it over and see what we can do about it next year."

"I can't promise, Gib. I must work when I'm in the mood, you know. Lately I've been resting. By the way," he fumbled among the papers on his desk and selected one, "this comes out next week. How do you like it?"

Gilbert read it in silence. He did not like it. It was much less spontaneous than the best of Dick's

work; it had a strained note, a suggestion of striving after an effect, which did not please him. However, he found something to praise, and Dick warmed under his words. As Gilbert rose to go he asked, "Have you been to Bishopton lately to see your mother?"

Dick flushed. "Too busy," he replied.

"You've heard from her, of course. I hope she's well?"

"Oh, yes," Dick said, raising his eyebrows. "There is no use in attempting to go, Gib. She's wholly influenced by the prejudices of a narrow-minded society. And I don't feel that I can expose myself to them at present. One must sacrifice something to one's production, you know. Much as I long to see my mother, I feel I must put it off until she's more reasonable."

The actor's eyes rested on his friend with a curious expression, under which Dick felt slightly uncomfortable. But Gilbert smiled with his accustomed gentleness.

"Ask Val to send me a line and appoint a time," he said, moving toward the door. "I must be off now. Good-bye, Dickie; take care of yourself."

"What a sensitive, strait-laced creature Gib is!" Dick thought, returning to his desk as the door shut on his friend.

CHAPTER XXV

POWER

NED BLAKELEY, who used to come to Gilbert's rooms and discuss the future with him for hours, was the only witness of Valentine's acting on whose opinion Carne could rely. Granger's powers of criticism extended little beyond that she had been "a little devil who walked off with the audience." But Blakeley, though impulsive in his judgments, was clear and definite in his recollection of Val's work and the impression made on him by it. He submitted patiently to his friend's cross-examination on this point, and always ended by returning to the same set of adjectives, the same conclusion.

"In comedy," he told Gilbert, "her work struck me as less significant because she simply expressed herself, and the critics may say what they please, but that is *not* dramatic art. But I've seen her in one or two parts of another colour, in which undoubtedly there was power of a sort."

"Interpretative?" Gilbert inquired eagerly; "or merely dramatic instinct? Does she impersonate or only act? It's so important, Ned."

Blakeley struggled to express himself. "I'm not good at the abstract," he said simply and thoughtfully; "but here, I can give it to you best by examples. In 'Frisco she did Reade's little play Peg for five nights. You remember the story—he mentions it in Peg Woffington—where the actress, disguised as a man, goes

down into the country, and revenges herself on a faithless lover by making love herself to her rival. Well! The thing is pure comedy; all but one scene, which is a moment of delicate balance between two emotions, and takes the most dexterous handling. Val was at her wildest; the audience were crazy between laughter and bewilderment, when this scene came. Its seriousness was distinctly out of tune in what was almost farce. In two minutes Val had the house as still as death—that silence, you know, when a man looks daggers at his neighbour if he rustles a programme.”

Gilbert nodded. “It beats applause,” he murmured.

“Well,” continued Blakeley triumphantly, “in two minutes more half the house was feeling for its handkerchief, when, by Jove! she had ’em back to laughter in a minute! And from that minute to the curtain they didn’t know which to do. When I saw that—I said, ‘There’s an artist!’”

“Yes,” agreed Gilbert, “that took head. But Shakespeare, Ned, Shakespeare! Have you ever seen her try that?”

Blakeley looked doubtful. “Only one or two minor parts. She did Audrey once, when I was William.”

“And how was it?”

“Good, of course. Quite loutish in a dainty sort of fashion, but not striking.”

“Inadequate, then?”

“To me, certainly. But, Lord, Gib, what does she know about the sixteenth-century woman?”

Gilbert sighed. “That’s just it,” said he. “Can one put it into her?”

“With that background—surely,” declared his friend with confidence; “and you’re the man to do it, my boy!”

Notwithstanding this encouragement, when the

day Val had set for their talk arrived, Gilbert was distinctly nervous. He set out for West End Avenue with every fibre strung taut to this most important errand. Not only did he regard his own future at stake, but also Valentine's. The life she was at present leading was, in his opinion, calculated to cut off at the roots the artist in her. His interest was not wholly professional; to him the girl's moral salvation was also in question. Power brings responsibilities, and he was about to pit himself against such subtle adversaries as hereditary instinct, chance, and circumstance. Bold, perhaps, but the man who knows himself may be bold. The impulse to help, so strong it might not be disregarded; the desire of good, not stagnant as it is with many, but active, fluent, moving toward a better understanding of his fellow-men; a force not sentimental but intellectual—this drove him forward with confidence and audacity. What nine out of ten called his egotism assured him that sooner or later he could lay hold on this woman and turn her nature into the road of deliberate effort and achievement. That such a work among men in their dealings with one another is seldom attempted, and is rarely successful when attempted, is due to the fact that it is almost always extraneous in character—not an effort to supply nature, and so gain control over it, but a mere hammering at it with forcible disapproval and antagonism. When we bring our problems to each other, how often are we met by the personal attitude of praise or blame, or by the necessity for adaptation, or by the lack of sympathy growing out of the lack of effort to understand! Personal influence, that strongest of all weapons for good, in most persons, through indifferentism, timidity, or cowardice, lies disused and rusted in the soul.

That September afternoon Gilbert walked the street with keen alertness and determination of mind.

He reached the house, and was bidden to take a seat in the reception part of the square hall, where he looked about him with irritation. The flashiness of the furnishing and pictures, the prodigal masses of roses whose perfume made the air heavy, were all distasteful to his present frame of mind.

Above his head sounded loud voices, the clatter of plates and knives, the "plop" of a cork being drawn. A luncheon party seemed in progress, and Gilbert, glancing at his watch, saw that it was after three o'clock, and gave an impatient exclamation under his breath. As he listened involuntarily to the sounds from the dining room, he plainly distinguished Dick's voice, high pitched and shrill, and unrestrained shrieks of laughter from Valentine. Momentary quiet was caused apparently by the appearance of his card. It was succeeded by the noisy withdrawal of chairs and other sounds of departure. Then farewells were exchanged, most of them shouted over the banisters as the guests descended. Gilbert looked up and saw three or four men, Dick in their midst, arm in arm with one of them. He gave Gilbert a boisterous "Hello, Gib!" by way of greeting; there followed a great deal of swearing over the collection of hats on the rack, then the front door closed after the host and guests. Quiet fell, and Gilbert was asked to come upstairs.

The disorder in the room to which he was shown increased his feeling of impatience. The table set out in its midst had been extravagantly spread. Everything on it and about it—the flower petals, the empty bottles, the spilled wine and food, the vulgarity of the display—jarred his acute mood. Valentine was alone when he entered. She stood with her back toward him, drinking thirstily out of a tumbler which she had just filled from the carafe of water at her side. Hearing his step in the doorway, she turned, gave him

a little nod of welcome over the tumbler, then refilled it and drank again. Then she set it down, wiped her mouth with a napkin, and came rapidly toward him.

She was elaborately dressed in a preposterous costume of sky-blue satin, falling gracefully to her feet and belted fantastically with jewels. Lace fell from her throat and arms, and glittered with spangles in delicate designs. Her hands were heavy with showy rings, which seemed absolutely to degrade their strong nervous outlines. Her cheeks were touched with paint; her eyes were dilated and sparkling. Her uneven yellow hair escaped its bonds in rough curls. The dress served to intensify the strong irregularity of her features, the restless vitality of their expression, but although Carne might have found much to admire in her figure, he was merely conscious of disapproval and dislike.

"Hello!" she cried with a toss of her head, and gave him both her hands. He shook one, perhaps a trifle stiffly, and took the chair she indicated.

"We've been lunching," Val explained, seating herself at the end of the table and eating almonds as she talked, "with Chambers—that millionaire from Topeka. He used to see me when I acted out West, and he turned up last week, and stood some champagne and *this*—look!" She thrust her wrist toward him and tapped a flaring diamond bracelet.

"Very pretty indeed," Gilbert said heartily, looking at the bracelet. "Is Chambers from Topeka a friend of Dick?"

"Oh, yes! We had him and some of his friends at *one*." She glanced toward the clock and laughed. "They've been here ever since. We've had a great time. But I confess I'm tired. Men want so much to eat and drink."

"You like Chambers, then?" said Gilbert, con-

scious of deliberately using a delicate probe. "What sort of a fellow is he?"

"Very clever. He's advanced," Val declared, crunching almonds. "He read Dick's things a year or so ago and always liked them—although he didn't think they were sufficiently emancipated. But when he came to New York he heard that Dick and I were perfectly emancipated, so he asked for an introduction. He believes in perfect freedom for everybody from worn-out ideas and superstitions. Dick thinks so, too—and so do I, of course."

To save his life Gilbert could not keep a flicker of amusement out of his eyes at this speech. To hear this girl rattle off these justifications as a child might say its lesson—was it more funny or heartbreaking? For a second he swung between the two emotions, and Val, who was very quick, saw the reflection in his face.

"What is it? What are you laughing at?" she asked.

"Nothing," he replied quietly. "I was only thinking how very pleasant life must be to Mr. Chambers of Topeka."

Val nodded. "He has a good time," she agreed; then, eager to get to the subject which interested her, she asked: "Are you nervous at all, Gib?"

"I hope not," he answered; "and you?"

"Not a bit, so far." She spread out her hands with a gesture of confidence. "Of course, when the night comes I may be. Gib, shall I be a success?"

"I don't know, Val. Tell me about Ophelia."

"I've got my lines, of course. Do you want the mad scene?"

"No. I want to know what you think about Ophelia."

"Well, I think she was—rather weak, I suppose.

Gib, I don't know exactly what you mean," answered Valentine with a certain amount of puzzled helplessness. "I'm going to act her, you see."

Carne suppressed a sigh. "Who was Ophelia?" he asked. "What kind of a woman?"

"She was a Danish girl—Polonius's daughter," Val replied promptly, "and she—why, she went crazy."

Gilbert perceived that he had been right in regard to this girl's unconscious dramatic gift. So far as it went it was rich and fluent, but it was wholly instinct as yet, and as such quite at the mercy of chance influence. The mind had never been turned in upon it, to contemplate or control it. In desiring such intellectual development and control, Carne was chiefly guided by the obvious and unmistakable presence of the gift itself, without which the highest form of intellectual training would have led to little more than academic results. Gilbert was as well aware as any one of the difference between the scholarly and thoughtful player, and the one in whom there flashes the spark of interpretative insight. Now, when he saw this spark in the eyes of Valentine, he gained confidence.

"She went crazy," he repeated slowly; "you are sure of that. Well, what made her go crazy?"

Valentine sat with her long hands folded on her knee. Without moving her head, she turned her eyes upon Gilbert's.

"Hamlet told her he didn't care," she began rapidly, "and—no—it wasn't wholly, because—I always took for granted that was it." She paused, thought a moment, and looked up vividly. "The king said, 'Oh! this is the poison of deep grief; it springs all from her father's death,' " she suggested.

Gilbert's voice dropped to a lower note. "But did the king really know?" he asked softly.

A curious sort of struggle was visible for an instant

on Val's face. She drew a deep sigh, as if this sudden load of new thoughts was more than she could bear. "No, he couldn't," she said, and put her hand to her forehead. A pause of some minutes followed. Gilbert was afraid of disturbing what he felt to be an important silence. Mentally, he now had Valentine by the hand. Suddenly she lifted her head. "I'm wondering, Gib," said she in a hushed, eager voice, "if, after all, I've learned it right? It seems to me now there is more than I thought. Things change the sense of the lines. Let me do the mad scene, and we'll see." She rose absorbedly, pushed aside the chairs, and walked to the door at the end of the room. Gilbert meanwhile watched critically. The scene was played by her appealingly, gracefully, with all her charm of voice and manner, with due adherence to form and tradition, but without a trace of anything deeper. Val's Ophelia was merely Val, deranged and pathetic. The action cleared her mind of its confused ideas, and when she had made an end she looked at him, brightly confident and sparkling again.

"Lunatics do that—Dr. Green told me so," she remarked, alluding to some trick of which she had made use.

"I doubt if Ophelia did, however," said Gilbert curtly.

"Sit down," he commanded, and she obeyed. She put her elbows on the table and rested her chin on her palms, covering her mouth with her fingers. There was a provocative mischief and excitement in her brilliant eyes. Carne drew his chair nearer, and pushed away the plates and glasses to left and right. He folded his thin hands together and knit his brows. His eyes looked straight into Valentine's, and held them steadily. She felt the force of his attention concentrated upon her.

"That was very pretty, Val," said he, "but I want

something different of you. How much do you care about this part?"

"I love it," she replied, with a quiver.

"Enough to work for it?"

"Enough to do anything."

"How closely do you know Ophelia? How did she live, and feel, and think? Why did she say to Hamlet 'I was the more deceived'?"

She repeated the words after him with the lackadaisical intonation of tradition. Gilbert raised his hand.

"But think. What sort of a man was Hamlet?"

"To tell you the truth I never could make up my mind," she declared. The excitement in her eyes was being replaced by a passionate interest. "He was so changeable—one thing one minute, one the next."

"Like any man you know, for instance?"

"A man living *now*, you mean?"

"Yes, a man living now."

Again that baffled struggle in her face, followed by a clear intelligence. "Why—why—why—" she said, stammering with eagerness, "he's like Dick—a little, and often he's like you!"

"How, Val?"

"You know what I mean—he watches himself live, just like Dick, and he always wants to know the reason of things the way you do. Oh, I see—and Ophelia——" She paused, evidently absorbed in her imagination. He tightened his grip, and began to sway her to and fro.

"She lived too, didn't she? When she said——"

"Oh, I know! Wait, Gib. I didn't understand before."

After a moment's silence Gilbert said, hardly above his breath, "Tell me about her."

Val's face was half bewildered, wholly concentrated. She murmured to herself, and then began to

speaking aloud in obedience to his suggestion, but she did it almost unconsciously. Her hand moved to and fro on the table nervously, as she began to put her thoughts into words. The room was very quiet.

"I think—she was high-strung, nervous, and delicate. She couldn't have been like most of the women in that country—they were coarse and rough, like Gertrude. But she was different; and the difference made it hard for her. She had an old father—how could he understand? And her brother, fond as he was of her, was an active, energetic fellow, not a bit sympathetic." Valentine pushed back her chair and began to walk the room with her long step. Gilbert sat intent.

"She lived," Val went on more fluently, "in a dream world, like lots of girls. And when Hamlet came back—he was different too; and he was so unhappy. Of course she fell in love with him. He seemed like a fairy prince, or the hero of an old ballad. He was so gentle to her, and he understood. It was all vague to her and beautiful—the world—the love. I suppose she used to sit and dream, and sing old songs to herself softly, and tell herself stories about what would happen. She never faced the real future; she just dreamed. When Laertes and her father spoke to her it was a jar. Why, you can see that when Laertes talks—kind and brotherly, you know, and because he sees what sort of a girl she is—that it jars and distresses her. Then horrible things happen all around her. And then comes Hamlet's talk—so different from the way he used to speak, so wild, and strange and bitter. It was a dreadful shock. She said 'I was the more deceived.'"

The thrill Val gave the words, the lift of her head, penetrated Gilbert: he inwardly exulted. Val's voice rose a little; she seemed to have forgotten his pres-

ence in the room; the thoughts followed one another smoothly in her speech.

" . . . Then Hamlet kills her father, and it springs upon her at once—all the ugliness, the horror, the evil king and queen—and it is too much. She is delicate and frail, and it is a too sudden awakening; something snaps. Everything has changed; nothing is what she thought it was—*nothing*. And then she is mad; she has forgotten all the beautiful dreams; she tries—she tries pitifully to recall them. 'There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; *pray you, love, remember.*' "

Her voice ceased. She stood an instant, imagination transfiguring her face. Gilbert was swept by an indescribable wave of triumph and relief. Val came slowly back to the table and sat down by it. She looked at him doubtfully. "Is it like that?" she asked.

"Yes, it is like that. Can you act it that way?" With parted lips she studied his face for a moment, then gave a little quick nod. "I think so; I'll try. But, Gilbert"—she leaned eagerly forward—"I must know more!"

CHAPTER XXVI

VALENTINE GROWS

"You really think we might be famous like those long-ago people—Mrs. Siddons or Garrick?"

"Yes, if we work hard enough."

Valentine put this question during one of the almost daily conversations which followed that described in the last chapter. She was sitting in the office of the theatre after a long, hard morning's work. Her face was pale, her eyes tired; she wore a dark, businesslike dress and her hair was hidden under a thick veil. Seen thus she seemed older—an earnest, determined young woman. Gilbert sat in an office chair watching as she spread the volume of Doran's *Annals* open before her.

"I did well enough, then?"

"You did well; but how you have changed it, Val!"

She gave her head an impatient shake. "I didn't know before. O Gib, but I have wasted my time! Why do you suppose I never dreamed there was so much to know about it all?"

"You would have found out in time," he answered. Nothing had ever given him keener pleasure than to supply this newly awakened and hungry intelligence. His ambition and sense of power were equally gratified by the exercise. During the last month it seemed positively as if he had watched her grow.

"By the way"—she raised her head from the book—"they weren't exactly a good lot, were they?"

"No," said Gilbert curtly, "they weren't."

"And yet it didn't seem to make any difference."

"Didn't it, Val? It strikes me it has made it a good deal harder for *us*."

"You mean harder for our work to be worth something to people?" she asked quickly; and he again underwent a thrill of pleasure at her growing penetration.

"You see," she went on gravely, fingering the pages, "Dick always talks as if *this* sort of thing was right and fine; he calls it *freedom*. I thought so till I read about all those women." She gave a twist of disgust. "Dick says we are entirely different, of course; but I can't help wishing——" She stopped, and sat thinking deeply. A more complex nature than Valentine's would not have shown so plainly the evidences of growth. But this girl, exceedingly simple, natural, and gifted besides with an extraordinary power of self-expression, displayed her development with unusual vividness. Gilbert realized with a throb of excitement the presence in her nature for the first time of a moral idea. The effect it had upon him was to strengthen his determination, and his belief in the value of work. He underwent during that moment a touch of reverence. Words rose in his mind. "There is nothing so good, so religious, as the endeavour to create something perfect."

"I think you are right and Dick is wrong," he said quietly, gently, for he was moved. "Put Doran away; I've something else for you. And Val——"

She looked at him. She had grown to feel the power of the man when he was in earnest.

"Which do you enjoy most—this rehearsing and studying, or champagne lunches with Chambers?"

"Nonsense, Gib; you know. But Dick likes Chambers."

"I know. But, Val, in the long run that sort of

thing, that life, will take from you the power of seeing and feeling clearly, truly. Not, perhaps, to-day or to-morrow, but in time it will dull your faculties. If we are going to do the work we want to do," he added with a smile, for he had felt a momentary awkwardness in the seriousness of these words, "we must 'scorn delights, and live laborious days.'"

"Who said that?" she asked quickly.

He told her, and then deliberately led their talk to poets and poetry. Above all, he did not wish to appear to guide her. He wrote that night to his sister: "Ally, I feel so tired and *responsible*. Yet the business fascinates me, and the possibility of giving this girl a life rope grows a little every day."

Professionally, Gilbert had every reason to be satisfied with Valentine. She had thrown herself into the work with what could only be described as passion. Scant as was her knowledge, it was to her Gilbert was indebted for some of his finer points; in the animated discussions which took place between himself and Blakeley or Granger, a flash of her insight often swayed the decision. She had a fertile imagination which delighted to invent suitable details of by-play and grouping. Her unflagging pride, interest, and spirit often served to refresh her tired comrades, to whom the task had grown heavy. Then, too, the work had lent her dignity; her absorption in it was so complete as to shield her, for the time being, from gossip and chatter. Gilbert had never yet measured the stability of her character, and he had feared that she might be led by excitement to take too much notice of the world at large. As time went on, however, and he saw her alert, strong, eager, patient, and passionately intent on her task, he lost his dread of what she might say to the newspapers. Maynard, thinking to do her a service, wrote her up in a spicy account for his paper, which had certainly the effect of stimu-

lating public interest in her *début*. Gilbert was known and more or less of a favourite; but to many the chief feature of the affair lay in Valentine's appearance.

"She is wonderful, Ned, wonderful!" Gilbert told Blakeley one night as they walked home together. "I always knew she had sensitiveness and talent, but I never dreamed of this force. After Ophelia she must have something broader. If I had half of her richness of talent I shouldn't be so nervous over the result."

"You need not be, anyhow," declared his friend cheerfully, and Gilbert squeezed his shoulder. Blakeley's constant serenity and sunniness were always a comfort to his own uneven moods.

"I can't describe to you, Ned, what it opens before me," he continued after a pause; "more than I ever dreaded of, providing Hamlet is not a failure."

"He will not be, Gib."

"Then, think of it! Long years of work—you, Val, and I—a series of productions that shall have a value as art and literature, a true standard, independence in our work! Think of the list of parts which Val can play! Shakespeare given with some dignity and consistency and intelligence. Then I mean to have a turn at some others—revive *Cedipus*, for instance—and do the *Duchess of Malfi*, perhaps—oh, the list is endless. And if Dick will get to work, we may have something original, some comedy or tragedy worthy of the name."

"Gib, I never saw you so excited."

Gilbert laughed, and walked on a little way in silence. Then he said: "It's because I never supposed I could get a leading woman at all capable of what I wanted to do; and Val is."

Blakeley remained without speaking for some moments. The light of a street lamp falling on his smooth, good-natured face, showed it clouded with some embarrassment.

"Gib," he said at length, "have you ever thought about this business on its personal side?"

"What do you mean? I've thought of it on every side."

"In regard to Val, I mean. Of course you know what people are saying?"

Gilbert set his mouth and straightened his shoulders. He was in a combative mood to-night; alert, and easily jarred.

"I suppose they do me the honour to name me as Dick's successor," he said icily; "they've lost no time."

Blakeley looked up at him. "Now don't get all screwed up, old man," he said warningly. He knew Gilbert's susceptibilities.

"I won't; but, Ned, isn't it disgusting and disheartening? Perhaps I had made up my mind it would be said sooner or later, because it always is said; but she hasn't been at work a month!"

"I know; but, you see, Val——"

"You needn't explain"—Gilbert interrupted him abruptly; "anyhow, I've got to disregard it, and go ahead." He thrust his hands into his pockets and quickened his pace. "She's got to live it down; and by and bye it'll show itself a lie. I'd like to get up now and stop their mouths, but it's more important to me that she should stand on her feet than that *they* should be satisfied. And they'll say it, anyhow."

"There is only one person who might be affected by it," Blakeley suggested, after a pause, "and, if you will forgive me, old fellow, that's why I mentioned it." His tone was significant. Once, some time ago, in a moment of confidence, Gilbert had given him a hint of his feeling for Philippa Cushing. They had never talked on the subject—the hint had remained indefinite—but Blakeley had understood. Now, Gilbert was one of the most wonderful men in the world to

Blakeley, and though he had never quite unravelled all the other's complexities, yet his own strong, sincere friendship gave him a hold.

"Who's that?" Gilbert asked shortly; but he knew.

"Miss Cushing. You wouldn't like her to hear it?"

"Miss Cushing has known me quite intimately for some time," Gilbert replied in a noncommittal voice; "I hardly think she can believe such a slander of me."

"Still," Blakeley ventured, "it's another woman." Gilbert made no reply to this, and said nothing further during their walk. He bade his friend good night, climbed the stairs to his sitting room, and threw himself into a chair. The clock struck two a second after, but he did not move. After a while he took a letter from his pocket in Philippa's handwriting, and unfolded it. He reread it closely, stopping always at a certain paragraph near the end. It was not a very long letter. The writer began with excuses for her delay in answering Gilbert's interesting account of his work. Then followed an animated description of Newport, a yachting cruise, and the latest new book. The last page contained some questions on the Hamlet and these words: "I hear you are perfectly wrapped up in the preparations. I'm afraid you won't have any time next winter for your old friends."

Gilbert put his hands over his eyes and thought. "She can't ever believe such a story about me, she can't," he assured himself. "Why, she knows what I am better than any one! And I told her what I meant to do."

Somehow he could not be thoroughly convinced. His tired face took on lines of pain, and his sleep that night did not bring the usual refreshment. We prepare ourselves to be misunderstood by the world, yet it

is always a shock when the first person to misunderstand is the one whom we have fancied knew us to the core.

Steady work had set in motion certain changes in Valentine's way of life. Gilbert's words had borne fruit, and she was usually too busy for the plans and festivities of Chambers from Topeka. There was a little room at the top of the house into which she locked herself with her books. Dick marvelled at her. One morning he found her in the act of giving away the dress of sky-blue satin and lace she had worn on the occasion of Gilbert's first visit.

"Don't you like that pretty frock, Val?" he asked. "I always loved it—the colour is like the sky."

"It's too fussy to wear now," Val replied, "when I've got so much to do."

Dick had had a check that day. "Don't you want a new one?" he asked, pulling a roll of bills out of his pocket. "Get something pretty."

She looked at him with sparkling eyes as she caught the roll he tossed to her. "Oh, thank you, dearest," she cried; "but I've plenty of dresses—really. Would you mind if I got some of those books Gib was talking about?"

Of course Dick did not mind. "You are getting to be such a reader!" he declared, sitting down beside her and slipping an arm about her waist. "Such a learned person! I shall be quite afraid of you."

"O Dickie, don't laugh at me," Val implored; "you see you know so much about everything." She laid her cheek childishly upon his shoulder; and Dick smiled a tender patronage and encouragement.

"Sanderson wants us to go on his four-in-hand and get supper out of town," he said. "Don't you want to accept?"

She raised her head. "I really can't, dear. I need every minute now. You go without me."

"But I sha'n't enjoy it without you. Gib works you like a horse!"

"It's the new play, dear—the little one that's to be put on after Hamlet. I've such a part—and I *must* do it well. I don't know the people half well enough yet."

"Let's see how you do it," Dick requested, and she obeyed him gladly. She could hardly have had a more sensitive auditor to the intense little scene. Dick turned hot and cold by turns, and was wholly swayed by her. His hands were clasped so tightly that the fingers were white. When she paused he sat quiet, looking at her with an uncertain expression.

"It's wonderful," he said awkwardly, "wonderful, Val!" His descriptive faculty seemed to have abandoned him for the moment. "How you have improved!"

"Gib says so, too," she said, delighted.

"It's wonderful," Dick repeated. He made a movement to take her into his arms, then suddenly released her and began to walk the floor with knit brows. She watched him, puzzled. He moved thoughtfully to the door and turned.

"I tell you what, Val," he said vehemently, "that play of mine will have a part for you worth acting. And it will be a piece of literature as well, not trash like that. I'm going to begin it now."

CHAPTER XXVII

HAMLET

"LOUISE," said Mr. Bentley one evening during one of those dressing-for-dinner talks with his wife, which were often the most important incident of his day, "do you really think we had better go to town and see the opening night of Carne's Hamlet under the circumstances?"

"Under what circumstances, dear? If we don't go Phil will get somebody else."

"You know people said he was after her, and of course he encouraged the notion," said Bentley vigorously. "It would have been a good thing for him. And he writes to her, I know."

"Oh, Philippa will never do anything of that kind," Mrs. Bentley declared with confidence; "she has far too much sense."

"I acknowledge you've improved her, Lou. But now that the cousin has done for himself, and our young friend is less anxious to diminish her income by any model-tenement trash, I do feel as if I would like to avoid this actor, if possible. He's a shrewd enough fellow, and she quotes him to me. And, you'll acknowledge," Mr. Bentley wound up, "that although she's had plenty of chances, she hasn't so far taken to any of them."

"In my opinion"—Mrs. Bentley's voice had assumed its most finished and conclusive intonation—"no one in the least suitable has presented himself."

"Young Beverley?" suggested her husband.

"Who is Beverley? Some perfectly obscure Virginian—no position in New York that *I* know of."

"But he's doing very well, my dear," said Bentley, who had reasons of his own for thinking highly of the young broker. During the last year his wife had grown fond of Philippa, and her interest had gained in warmth.

"Oh, I dare say," she replied, with faint damnable chilliness. "To the tune of nine or ten thousand a year? I thought so. Well, I don't call that a good match."

A pause fell, which Mrs. Bentley broke with an entire change of tone. "I'm awfully sorry for your sake that it's to be Hamlet, dear. I know it will bore you dreadfully."

"That, of course," he agreed; "but, Louise, apart from its boring me, why on earth should any one nowadays want to do anything so hackneyed as Hamlet? If there's one thing that should be put down by law, it is this form of entertainment at which one is not permitted to be late."

"I always thought Hamlet pretty gloomy myself," his wife replied absently; "but I'd rather go with Philippa than send her with any one else."

"You have taken to her, haven't you?" Bentley remarked, coming into the room.

"She's such a dear girl," declared Mrs. Bentley, with a smile, "and makes me such a companion when you are away! It's almost as if——" She stopped abruptly and bent her head over the clasp of her bracelet. Her husband waited in vain for her to finish the sentence, then, with what for him was a rare demonstrativeness, went up to her and kissed her.

"Do you know I think you are the most beautiful woman in the world?" he whispered to her. She whispered something back, then with a little laugh they

drew apart and immediately resumed the businesslike and confident manner of their daily lives.

The result of this conversation was that a party was made up from Tuxedo, where the Bentleys and Philippa were passing a few autumn weeks, and a box was taken at Granger's Theatre for the opening night. On the whole, Philippa had had rather a tiring September. There had been the stable to rebuild and set in order, the house to be entirely done over and remodeled. Her summer's experience had made these changes seem necessary, if only through the incessant, indefinite pressure of the lives around her. When the estimates for this work had been made and submitted, and then added to other increased expenses, she had reflected on her dream of philanthropy with a touch of dismay.

"Why, I never could do that!" she thought; "I'm not rich enough."

Then the recollection came to her that she had discovered plenty of charitable uses for her money, that her name figured on many boards, and her presence and pocketbook at numberless meetings. "Nobody can say that I don't try to be a faithful steward," she thought with a comforted sigh. A week later, when Gilbert in one of his letters made some inquiry as to her architect and her plans, she underwent a distinct feeling of resentment.

Perhaps it was this sensation, perhaps it was this being tired, which made Philippa look forward to the performance of Hamlet with less pleasure than she had anticipated. There was also the uncomfortable feeling that she was boring Mr. and Mrs. Bentley and slightly amusing their friends by her enthusiasm for Gilbert's work. She was exceedingly sensitive to the point of view of persons who spoke with such authority, and anxious to be justified in her, to them, very youthful interests. Therefore she eagerly took up a

chance suggestion of somebody, that if Mr. Carne made a great success it would be agreeable to make his acquaintance. She wrote Gilbert, asking him to meet the party in their box and go afterward to the Waldorf with them for supper.

"He's awfully busy, of course," she said doubtfully; "perhaps he may not want to do it."

"Of course he will want to do it," Mrs. Bentley declared with confidence, "as he's a friend of yours"; and she glanced in the direction of her husband with a smile. So the note was sealed and despatched. Gilbert received it on the very morning of the first performance. He had opened it with a throb of pleasure at sight of her handwriting, but this was speedily followed by a disappointed incredulity as he read the contents. It seemed extraordinary to him that any one could suppose that after five acts of Hamlet and the general nervous strain, he would be in a condition, mentally or physically, to meet people and go out to supper. Yet he wanted to see and talk with Philippa, and wanted to do as she wished beside; he was for a long time upon the point of acceptance. Then he began to think. He would have no chance for a word alone with her; it would come at an hour of considerable nervous exhaustion and reaction. There was the next night's work to be thought of, and the precedent to be established; and, after all, it was not Philippa he was obliging so much as the Bentleys and their friends. He sat down then and there and wrote her an answer, which he sent at once by messenger to her house. Then, plunged into the excitements of the day, by sheer effort of will he drove the disappointment from his mind.

The night was fair and not too warm. It had been Philippa's intention to go to her town house for Carne's reply, but the train was delayed, and when the party from Tuxedo reached New York they had no

time to do more than get comfortably to the theatre. A messenger was despatched for the note, and they went on to Granger's without further delay. They were settled in their box, looking out on the rapidly filling and brilliant auditorium, and one of the men of their party was pointing out to Philippa certain notable "first nighters" who were present, when Gilbert's note was brought in to her. She opened it and read:

"You must know that there is nothing I would rather do than see you to-night, but on thinking it over I feel that it would not be right; that when the play is finished I ought to go home at once and rest. This is denying myself indeed, but I have other nights' work ahead of me, and there has been a long strain of preparation. If I could see you alone I would not hesitate, but your invitation gives me no hope of that; and perhaps I shall be such a failure that when the time comes for me to meet your friends, neither they nor I will be in tune for it. Give me your good wishes for to-night, and forgive me. I feel sure you understand. I shall see *you* soon—whenever you will let me. Might I run down to Tuxedo?"

"Faithfully yours,

"GILBERT CARNE."

Philippa flushed, and moved her head a little proudly as she turned to Mrs. Bentley.

"Mr. Carne is not coming," she said; "he fears he will be too tired."

"Uncommonly sensible of him," said Mr. Bentley, smothering a yawn. "I know I shall feel like my bed after Hamlet."

"Odd of him to refuse what *you* ask," said one of the young men in Philippa's ear. The girl folded her note slowly. She was a trifle mortified at Gilbert's

refusal, and had been particularly anxious to have the Bentleys meet and approve of him. Also, it would have been pleasant for the hero of the evening to be seen in the company of her party. She had grown accustomed to have men do as she asked, particularly men whose notes took the tone of Gilbert's. She reflected that if he really liked her he would have come. Then she began to think of herself and him very gravely; thinking that although it was true Gilbert was intellectually a head and shoulders above any other man she had ever met, yet perhaps his ambition placed him at a disadvantage toward her. She had read that ambition killed love, and she believed, as most young and good-looking women believe, that love must have no rival, must be a single and all-absorbing idea. It is strange, not that most young girls hold love for themselves to stand before everything in a man's soul, but that they are so easily convinced that it does. Philippa had not time to pursue further these improving considerations; for the curtain rose, and she settled herself attentively to the interest of the evening.

The theatre was very crowded, and by an audience of critical temper. It had been twenty years at least since any native attempt had been made to present a classic, and the New Yorkers who filled Granger's Theatre were markedly different from those who had applauded the *Lear* of Forrest or the *Richard* of the elder Booth. It promised well for Gilbert's success that three important sections of the playgoing public were represented: the first and smallest, which enjoys Shakespeare worthily given; the second, much larger, which is anxious to welcome a new star; and the third, largest of all, which wishes to see what the two others admire. As the play progressed, it became evident to Philippa that a profound impression was being made upon this audience. The tragedy was

artistically staged and mounted, and moved forward with smoothness, offering no distractions to the attention. It was plain to see that the two chief figures held the observers closely, with perhaps a shade of preference in favour of Valentine. It was the first time that Philippa had ever seen her, and as she leaned forward eagerly to look into the Ophelia's face, she was conscious of a strong thrill of interest, followed by a reactionary one of distrust. Valentine had always possessed charm upon the stage, but never more, and never tinged with a greater individuality than on that night. As she followed Laertes reluctantly upon the scene, a slender figure in white and blue, and stood listening to his words with dreamy eyes and smile, half gentle, half protesting, the picturesqueness of her whole figure was striking. Philippa listened for the sound of her voice; it was resonant, full, and firm. "No more but so?" she answered, and it was plain Laertes handled but clumsily the fabric of Ophelia's day dream. Upon the entrance of Polonius, Ophelia left the two men and wandered over to the palace window, where she leaned, looking out upon the level valley touched with spring. Her attitude and gaze showed the girl enwrapped in her delicious imagining and cherishing her vision of love. When she turned to answer her father, she was indeed the "good child" of Goethe. The end of the scene was greeted with a round of applause, which, however, conveyed but dimly the effect she had produced. During the *entracte* Philippa saw Dick across the house, looking very pale and biting his mustache. All about her there was the stir and flutter of released attention; for the scene with the ghost had been followed with unusual closeness, and she could see and hear the favourable nods and comments. Philippa had begun to lose herself in the play; the view of Dick was a jar. She turned her eyes away quickly lest some

others of her party should see him and feel embarrassment.

The rest were talking with animation, and were certainly representative of the general interest. Mrs. Bentley had been greatly taken by Valentine; her husband, to whom picturesqueness did not appeal, had been struck by the restraint and quiet intensity of the acting. The other girl in the party was exclaiming upon the singular fitness of Gilbert's thin, haggard, aquiline face with its varying expressions of gentleness and satire; and the two young men were interested in the richness and detail of the production. Philippa joined in the discussion fitfully, but her mind was in a condition of inwardness, to which the figures kept appearing not as Hamlet and Ophelia, but as the Gilbert and Val she knew. Then Dick across the house and Gilbert's note in her pocket, added a vague element of disturbance.

The surprise of the audience as the play proceeded was decided. The two figures whose fortunes they followed upon the stage, were warm, individual, clothed with the hues of life. One of the strangest phenomena of fine acting is its effect in well-known or hackneyed parts; no greater praise could have been given Valentine than when it was said that she made the delicate and decorative figure of Ophelia a distinct personality. In this regard she accomplished more than Gilbert, over whose Hamlet there was waged a war of differing opinions. The presentation gave him an instant and recognised place among considerable players; but Val's Ophelia became a type.

The soliloquies, those great stumbling-blocks to the modern mind, were perhaps the greatest novelty of the evening. There was hardly a man present to whom Gilbert's inward-sounding voice—the thoughts following and suggesting each other—did not seem to echo certain profound moods of his own. And as no

character can be individual without its portrayal also suggesting the background of tendencies and beliefs, so Gilbert's Hamlet showed the scholar too much in advance of a rude age; the temperament of speculative and analytical imagination to which conditions present themselves as relative, thus checking and delaying the need of the times and the hour for prompt and violent action. This modernity of Hamlet's mind was the keynote of Gilbert's idea.

Again the curtain fell. The scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, superbly acted by both, had been borne largely by Valentine; and as the curtain rose on them Gilbert shook her warmly by the hand. Val's eyes were misty and saw little beyond Dick's face down in front, shining with triumph and pride.

"Well, it is really most interesting!" Mrs. Bentley declared warmly. "Jack," appealing to her husband, "have you been so impressed for a long time?"

"I haven't gone to sleep, if that's what you mean," he replied, laughing; then, leaning forward, he added, in a lower tone, "You may live to regret this night, Lou."

"Sh-sh!" Mrs. Bentley cautioned him, with a glance at Philippa's back.

The girl's mind had taken a complete revolution. On Gilbert's account she began to tingle with pride. It seemed to her as if he played to her and to her alone, and from the flattery of this idea was born another not less flattering. During a pause, while the others were talking she reread Gilbert's letter, and in this more responsive mood its significant note made her heart beat. One's dreams are often particularly vivid in a public or crowded place, and as Philippa read the words and thought of Gilbert's eyes as she had last seen them, it suddenly seemed to her as if the ambition which she had distrusted a moment before, was explained and had its end. Was not she herself

the inspiring presence, the goal for which Gilbert worked? She pictured herself present in his mind during each moment of the performance, nerving and urging him; her heart warmed and her eyes moistened at the thought. After all, he was so much more worth while than these nice young men. "What would they do for you?" she thought disdainfully, seeing Gilbert bring his laurels as an offering to her. A woman rarely realizes that her love is desired by an ambitious man for the enrichment and inspiration, but not for the end and goal of his life, and Philippa realized this less than most.

It chanced that Mrs. Bentley felt a draught, and, during the darkness of one scene a quiet shifting of position had taken place unobserved behind Philippa's back. Absorbed in the play, she had not noticed that the two young men of the party were now seated directly behind her chair. A pause in the action while the lights were still down, allowed her, however, to hear a little conversation, which grew out of the fact that the change had cut the young men off from a good view of the stage.

"Did you see Cushing down there?" was the first whisper which reached Philippa's ear.

"Yes; awkward for him, I should think," was the whispered reply.

"Maynard told me Carne had entirely cut him out in Mrs. Scott's affections."

"So I heard; but his being here doesn't look like it."

"Oh, it was bound to happen, of course—part of the programme."

"Well, I guess she's worth it."

"I guess she is." The voice dropped to a mere murmur followed by a little laugh, which was instantly suppressed.

In the darkness Philippa's cheeks burned. An-

other turn of her mental wheel took place, and one so much less pleasant that she was glad to lose herself wholly in the growing tragedy. Blakeley's Horatio came out well during the third and fourth acts, and his firm, excellent work got its share of applause. The mad scene roused quite a tumult, but Philippa did not clap.

"Didn't you like her, Phil?" Mrs. Bentley asked.

"Not so much," said Philippa critically, while the house shouted.

The tragedy moved on to its noble and inevitable end, the critics slipped out and dashed to their offices, and at the last curtain, Gilbert, looking very white and tired, was called upon to make a little speech of thanks. It was then, for the first time, that he thought of Philippa, looked and saw her, standing tall and handsome in the box with her cloak about her. She was not smiling; on the contrary, she was looking very serious.

"I have not failed," was his thought. "Is she glad at all?"

"Well, Phil, your friend has a very fascinating leading lady," Mr. Bentley remarked jocosely as the carriage rattled up Broadway.

Philippa smiled coldly. "Very," she replied. "What an awfully long play it is! By the time we get to the Waldorf every one will have gone!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CROSSROADS

ALTHOUGH Louise Bentley had spoken so confidently to her husband, yet she was in reality a little uncertain in regard to Philippa's attitude toward Gilbert Carne. The girl had decided reserves in her dealings with her friend, which even their great and growing intimacy did not unlock. It is true that, full of distress at the blow which had fallen upon her aunt, Philippa had talked quite freely to Mrs. Bentley on the subject of Dick and herself; but freely, indeed, as we discuss something past. Mrs. Bentley, in retailing the same to her husband, had joined in his pæan of thanksgiving over Philippa's deliverance; yet now she was beginning to feel that it might be a case of Scylla and Charybdis. The thick, closely written letters which arrived so often during the summer, Philippa had carried quite openly; Mrs. Bentley thought she traced to them little spasms of solid reading and philanthropic interest which distinguished her young friend. If she took a certain amount of dislike to Gilbert and prejudice against him, it was because he gave rise in Philippa to occasional questions which were hard to answer, and answers which were hard to refute. Like many admirable women of her caste, Mrs. Bentley classed all people and ideas which did not coincide with her philosophy of life in one large group, as "unpractical" and "lacking in knowledge of the world." This latter phrase was one which was used with authority by her

husband, a criticism based on his own daily experience; but it had a certain absurdity on the lips of Louise Bentley, who had never earned a quarter in her life. Mrs. Bentley's knowledge of the world was, in fact, complete when it was limited to her own small section of that planet. It guided her reasoning on the question of Philippa and Gilbert till it assumed the following form:

That Philippa was wealthy and prominent.

That Gilbert was an actor, a class notoriously improvident and anxious to be noticed by people like Philippa.

Therefore, that Gilbert wanted to marry Philippa.

There have been worse syllogisms than Mrs. Bentley's, who may be pardoned a natural anxiety on behalf of her young friend. Sounding Philippa, very tactfully, very delicately, produced no results, except, perhaps, the titles of some books which Gilbert had recommended. To certain of these—on political economy, for instance—Mrs. Bentley objected.

"Why do you muddle up your head with things like that?" she said. "Don't let anybody see you, Phil."

"Why not?" asked the girl dreamily.

"Most people wouldn't understand, and they will think you affected," explained her friend; "besides, there's no use in it, dear. These people, with their ideas about wealth and all, are usually students and scientific men, who are not practical. They don't realize that they can not alter human nature."

"I don't know," said Philippa doubtfully; "it does seem as if people who have money ought to give it—or the use of it—back to the commonwealth *somehow*."

"Well, but don't they?" said Mrs. Bentley triumphantly. "Just think what they do—the women we know—how much they give, how hard they work! People who write books like that never know what it

means to manage money. They usually have about two cents. Just take the question of entertaining, for instance: think how much work people give out who are giving a big ball, how much money they put into circulation!" And Mrs. Bentley, finding this tottering war horse of economics within reach, mounted him with assurance. In truth, Philippa's occasional anxiety and seriousness on the subject of her fortune struck the elder woman with impatience, as a little unbecoming. It was too self-conscious, she thought, a little *bourgeois*; to her mind, the essence of good taste lay in ignoring the money question and living as if unconscious of it. Not only was her influence thus brought to bear on Philippa, but her husband's also, and Mr. Bentley's manner of authoritative arrogance usually caused people to believe what he said—at first.

Since the night of Hamlet, Mrs. Bentley noticed a new reticence on Philippa's part, and argued ill from it, the more as the controversy in the press over Gilbert's work was long and furious. People talked to Miss Cushing about her friend, but she was not eager on the subject. The play settled down for an unexpected run, and whatever the divergence of critical opinion, there was no doubt of its success. The Sunday of its second week Gilbert had set aside to go down and pay Philippa a visit, which might, he thought, have important results. Her note in answer to his had been very cordial, and he met her in better spirits than he had been for a month past. The November afternoon came at the end of a long fortnight of Indian summer, and was clear, warm, and ripe with the ripeness of autumn. The red boughs were gone, but the mingled russet and yellow of the hillsides was exquisite still, as were the brown tints of the dry grasses underfoot. Faint layers of thin, dark cloud lay upon the horizon, and the smoke of burning brush rose into the air, diffusing pungent odours. The

young man and woman strolled across the fields to a distant chestnut wood, talking with animation. During the talk each surveyed the other, and Gilbert thought he had never seen Philippa look better. The summer had given her cheek a coat of tan, and lent elasticity to her step. The new fashion of wearing the hair was becoming to her, and the glowing yellow of her dress displayed her rich colouring. He found himself so overpoweringly glad to see her, that for him the conversation had its difficulties. Philippa thought that he looked thin and tired; she was glad, however, to find him not in an alert mood, for she had made up her mind to take this opportunity and "talk seriously" to him.

"We come to town next week," she told him, "and I am glad."

"So am I," said Gilbert. "What are you going to do this winter?"

"Lots of things," she answered; "I'm so hurried now I hardly know where to turn. I've joined the Municipal Club and the Tenement Art Society, besides the guild at St. John's. I'm on several boards, too." Her tone had importance. "Then, of course, there will be classes, and dining out and all that in addition. And the house is being done over, you know. I wonder how you will like it."

"I dare say it will be charming," said Gilbert, "but I must say I liked it as it was."

"So did I," agreed Philippa, "but it was getting shabby."

"So the tenement building is entirely given up?" he asked after a pause.

She glanced up quickly. "Don't you think all that will be enough for one winter?" she asked, with a half-disappointed laugh. Unconsciously, she had expected a word of admiring praise from him for her manifold charitable absorptions.

"Yes, it's a great deal," replied Gilbert; "I'm only wondering which would be the more satisfactory, that one thing, or all these others. It has always seemed to me better to stick to one or two things."

"But, then, you see," she explained, "so much is expected of one. And, to tell you the truth, Mr. Carne, I've come to agree with Mr. Bentley, that I really can't afford such an enterprise. It couldn't support itself, perhaps, for years; and then those properties in themselves are one of my largest investments."

"Yes," agreed Gilbert, in what she called his unsatisfactory tone. "I suppose it would involve a great deal of self-sacrifice."

They walked on some paces in silence. "Well?" queried the girl impatiently. "You had more to say. What do you really think about it?"

"I?" He looked down at her with a smile. "Well, it would seem to me worth it."

"But don't you think"—she was bent upon convincing him that her giving up was a piece of wisdom—"that Mr. Bentley is right when he says I ought to have more knowledge of the world before beginning such a thing?"

"I don't know," said Gilbert. "It strikes me there would be hardly any better way than that of getting just such knowledge. Not, perhaps, in Mr. Bentley's meaning of the word exactly, but in its broader meaning. You'd be brought so thoroughly in contact with people, and life, and work."

"Then you are still in favour of the scheme?" She spoke in a dissatisfied tone and with a little laugh. "Everybody else thinks it so absurd and quixotic."

"Oh, I'm neither for nor against, Miss Cushing. It depends just on how you feel about it yourself. No one else can possibly tell that." He met her eyes again with a smile, as he liked to do.

"But you do like it better than the church work and charity I've been telling you about," she persisted; "I can see you do."

Gilbert thought, "Well, if she must have it——"

"Yes, certainly I do," he replied briskly and candidly; "it seems to me a great waste to scatter your energies."

"But you've talked philanthropy to me by the hour."

"Real philanthropy, yes; one important work, not a dozen useless and miscellaneous charities. But I beg your pardon!"

Her rather wooden expression recalled to him that his words had lacked sympathy, and he added sensitively: "After all, what does it matter? You do what is right, I know. Don't let's discuss charity, you and I. There's so little time, and I've not seen you for five months."

His tone was almost boyish, but Philippa was not wholly appeased. She was silent, and he continued: "It has seemed *very* long to me, though I've been fortunate in having so much to do."

"Yes," she replied, "you are always happy when at work, I know."

"Not necessarily happy, but absorbed, certainly."

They reached the edge of the chestnut wood, and sat down on a pile of fence rails. Philippa began mechanically to make a little collection of chips as Gilbert went on speaking quietly. "You were in my mind all the time I worked. I wanted the Hamlet to be good enough for you to praise. Was it?"

"Oh, yes," she replied readily, but her tone told him she was not thinking about the Hamlet, and he was disappointed. "I wonder," she continued meditatively, "if I have really any influence over you?"

"You know you have a great deal."

"But I wonder how much?" She looked thoughtfully at him. "Would you do what I asked because I asked it?"

He did not give the ready and eager assent; he sat with his strong face turned toward the fields. "I'm afraid," he said with a smile, "that even with you I should say it would depend."

During the preceding summer Philippa had had the experience of being made love to, more or less sincerely, by several young men. Their language during the various crises had been characterized by an extravagance which was singularly lacking in Gilbert Carne. Philippa had been told that she was the first and only being to rouse in their hearts an affection really deep and enduring, and that no sacrifice was too great to win a smile from her. It is true she had been left untouched by these avowals, but they had served to establish a standard; by their measure she unconsciously measured Gilbert. Her mind closed firmly upon these ideas, failed to take into account the difference of character, temperament, ideals. Particularly did she fail to grasp one truth—that a man like Gilbert, whose profession was the accentuation of simulated emotion, would be more repressed than another when that emotion was sincere and touched his life. Had her mind been open, had she been thoroughly in touch with him during their conversation, he would have inspired her with a depth of confidence, which is the best foundation to life woman can ask. But at the moment, Philippa had in mind the "serious talk" she was going to have with this young man, over whom she possessed an influence; she was very deeply engrossed by her responsibility, and it filled her mind in every chink and cranny.

She sat silent and grave after his reply; and he finally turned his head to her as if to dismiss the question.

"I am so glad—so very glad to have a talk with you again," he said in a moved voice.

"There's something I want to speak to you about," said Philippa; "it has been troubling me a good deal."

"Yes?" Gilbert slipped from his seat on the fence rail to the ground, a foot or so nearer to where she sat. She continued slowly, without looking up, "It's about you, Mr. Carne."

"About me?"

"Yes. You won't think me impertinent in mentioning it?"

He dismissed the suggestion with an impatient movement. "Of course not. Let me hear."

Philippa looked steadily into his eyes; they gave her that odd, unaccountable thrill.

"People are saying—things—about your engagement of Valentine Scott."

Silence followed her remark. When she glanced at him a little timidly, he met her eyes quietly. "Yes?" he asked.

"What?" said Philippa with a shock. "You knew?"

"Why, certainly, Miss Cushing. It has not troubled you, I hope?"

He waited anxiously for her response; then went on to explain.

"Did you think I could remain in ignorance, in the life I lead? This is no more than I had anticipated. Don't you see that, after Val's story, such things are bound to be said about her?"

"Then"—Philippa's voice was chilled—"you know what is said, and you've taken no steps to stop the slander?"

"But what steps could I take?"

"The right ones, of course."

Gilbert hastened to explain. "Ah, but think!" he said. "Do you remember my telling you a long while

ago what my plans were in regard to Val? Well, I was going to talk it over with you to-day. I was right in my surmises, and I believe, Miss Cushing, I'm going to succeed. Already I've got her to working for the work's sake, and she's leading a much healthier life. She has so marked a talent and such application, some day, I believe, she'll be a noble character. Why, I've interested her already——" His voice had grown strong with enthusiasm, but just here an unresponsiveness in her manner checked him. He added quickly, "You are not agreeing with me in this?"

Philippa shook her head. "It seems to me," she said, "that in your position you ought to be particularly careful. I think you oughtn't to be associated in any way with a doubtful woman."

Her reply seemed to Gilbert to miss the point, thereby rousing him to a momentary impatience. "That is not a fair term to apply to Val, Miss Cushing. Poor child, she's a victim of circumstances if ever there was one."

"I don't see how you can condone what she has done. Certainly she is living an immoral life, and has put herself beyond the pale of decent society."

Her vivacity made him regret the tone of his last remark, and he replied gently: "Indeed I don't condone it, but it makes me more anxious to help her a little if I can; don't you see?"

"But, Mr. Carne, don't you think you overrate your power to do this? From what I hear I can't believe you will do good; and for my own part I hold it is one's duty to keep away from evil."

He shook his head and said nothing. Philippa went on argumentatively: "I speak for your own good, you know. You must see that it is very disadvantageous to you to have all this talk."

"I'm afraid I must not mind that disadvantage if I know I am right."

"But there it is! I don't think you are at all right."

The discussion had reached a point at which they naturally paused. Gilbert was fairly frightened. Never before had he realized the changes the last year had wrought in them. Only a twelvemonth before, and they had been speaking of work, of consistency, of the world's attitude toward their ideals. The recollection caused him to say, turning toward her: "Perhaps I don't quite catch your meaning. Just what is it you object to in my conduct?"

"Why, I think," said Philippa, with a spot of red in each cheek, "that, knowing the kind of person she is, you ought not to have anything to do with her."

"But I am necessarily brought into daily contact with her in our profession."

"Then," said Philippa, very low and firm, "I don't think you ought to have engaged her in the first place."

He did not immediately reply. When she looked toward him, he raised his eyebrows and said courteously: "It's impossible for me to see it the way you do. I really can't attach so much importance to these lies which are circulated about every one, as I do to Valentine's growing a fine woman and doing fine work."

"But you don't know that she ever will."

He made no answer. After a pause, Philippa said regretfully: "I'm sorry you can not see it, because all this has to do with our friendship."

"Has it?"

"I owe you a great deal, Mr. Carne, but I don't see how I can be an intimate friend of a man who is at the same time friendly with that kind of woman. It's insulting."

He sprang up and began to walk up and down the grassy space in front of her. His face was pale and frowning.

"I can't believe that you are going to make a point

of this. Listen to me one moment. In the first place, Val is not twenty-two years old. No one in that time has ever made it his business to give her a single hold on an idea of morality, or right, or religion. She has never been taught self-control, or the reason for doing or not doing anything. Now, she has an enormous talent, and it is so strong that it is the best lever to lay hold on. Don't you see that the affair with Dick on which you lay so much stress, is only an outcome of the whole? My interest in her dates from far back. I knew her as a child. I knew her mother and her father. I don't mind telling you, since we've gone so far, that the latter was a relative of my own. You see what all this means. The kind of work she will do with me, the surroundings, the more dignified and healthy life which will be necessary—all these will be influences for good. And then, don't you see that these lies will die out of themselves? The new Val will live them down. I counted on your sympathy in this more than I can tell you, because I need it so. Don't you understand?"

She sat, biting her underlip, shaken a little by the ardour of his voice and eyes, but with a mind inflexible. "I do understand," she said sedately, "that you are very much interested in Valentine. But you do not seem to be willing to make any sacrifice for this friendship of mine you speak of needing so much. Forgive me if I can't quite believe in it."

At each speech of hers it seemed to him as if his mental figure of her receded a step. His expression touched Philippa, but she felt also the desire of punishing him a little for his resistance.

"I had not supposed," she said, "that you would hesitate one instant. I own I'm disappointed. And then, too, it does raise the question whether there can be all the smoke without a little——"

"Philippa!" The word was almost a cry. His eyes

flashed indignation: their fire made her heart contract, but she was no better pleased with him that he had moved her so. Both had risen, and they moved forward mechanically over the fields. By and bye Gilbert said: "Does the sacrifice you speak of mean abandoning my plans for Val's work with me in the future?"

"It means willingness to do so, certainly."

"I can't understand," he murmured. Then aloud, "When you realize that they are a necessary part of all which my ambition has striven for so long?"

"Ah, there it is!" cried Philippa triumphantly; "that insatiable ambition of yours!" She became very serious. "I must warn you as a true friend, Mr. Carne, of this growing egotism. You see it yourself; you speak of needing my friendship, but you won't sacrifice the least atom of your ambition for it."

"Until this moment," was his low reply, "the two have been inseparable."

"Then give me proof of it."

Again he met her eyes; they flashed sincerity, and his heart contracted with the realization of it. In the moment of hesitation he remembered to pull out his watch, and found he had just time to catch the train.

"I must go," he told her.

"Come and see me in town," Philippa said earnestly, giving him her hand. She felt that she had wounded him more than she had intended. "After you have thought it over."

He shook hands with her, and moved quickly away across the meadow to the station. As she looked after his tall, receding figure, tears came to her eyes. She wiped them away bravely. "It's often so hard to do what's right," she thought, as she turned homeward.

CHAPTER XXIX

GILBERT CHOOSES HIS WAY

WHEN Gilbert mentally reviewed this conversation, he was inclined to blame himself. He felt he had been impatient, hard, egoistic—unwilling to recognise the motives which underlay and prompted her attitude. Had he been more sympathetic in manner, perhaps he could have won her to a responsive point of view. For the ensuing fortnight he thought of little else. The subject was very important to him. If the lack of understanding and sympathy between them was only temporary and evanescent, well and good—he had enough self-confidence to win her back; but if it was fundamental, it must mean that he renounced his dreams of two years past. Gilbert's ideal of happiness included the companionship and affection of a woman, but he could not fail to see that the tendencies of Philippa's life were leading her farther and farther away from full participation in one like his own. Had she possessed strong, separate interests, an individual ambition, love for some form of intellectual work, however different from his, he would not thus hesitate; but he realized that they had no such common ground. So soon as he dared after hearing she was in town, he went to see her. She was at home and entertaining several visitors, when he was announced. Gilbert looked about him regretfully. He had liked the simplicity and solidity, the rich colours and comfortable, unostentatious furnishing of the Cushing house, and

he now beheld it transformed. Everywhere were light tints and gilding, delicate draperies, and costly details. He caught himself thinking how much more trouble and time and money all this new luxury would require; just so much less to give to the leisurely, studious life which he had always fancied was her ideal.

Philippa sat behind her gleaming tea table. She sparkled in the consciousness of looking her best; the little air of graciousness had grown more defined. The elderly lady who occupied a near-by chair had just been begging to add her hostess's name to the list of patronesses of a charity in which she was interested; she had made Philippa feel that the addition of that name was important to the success of the enterprise.

When Miss Cushing looked up and saw Carne's tall figure in the doorway she was glad. She had wished to see him for some time. He was introduced, drew up a chair, and seated himself with determination to outstay the last guest. Truth to tell, his arrival lengthened the visits rather than cut them short, and he had to hear many compliments and reply patiently to many banalities before the ladies took their departure. As Philippa turned back into the room after accompanying the last of them to the door, he said to her: "Don't let any one else come."

She looked at him, laughed a little, and he heard her say to the man, "Barry, if any one else calls this afternoon, say I am not at home."

"Well, isn't Mrs. Vermilye charming?" she asked Gilbert as she resumed her seat.

"I suppose so."

"She has been crazy to ask you to her house all last winter."

"And now she's crazier still?"

Philippa glanced up. "What if she is? You need not be so cynical. She is a very interesting and clever

woman," she said, in a tone of reproof. Gilbert laughed.

"I was absurd; but I wanted her to go; she bored me horribly."

"You are too easily bored, Mr. Carne." Then, changing her tone, she added, "But do tell me how you like the house."

"It's beautiful," he answered warmly; "all that harmony of colouring; how well you have done it! But I should think you would find it a great care now." He spoke tentatively.

She replied: "Perhaps; but there are the servants, and one must have a decent house," and paused.

Gilbert asked abruptly, "Have you heard recently from Mrs. Cushing?"

"I had a letter Saturday; she is quite well."

This time the pause fell in earnest. Philippa sat with downdropped eyes, playing with her teaspoons. Each felt that the other was about to revert to their last conversation, each waited for the other to begin. Gilbert finally spoke, shifting his position. His tone was quiet but significant. "Since we last met I have been thinking of little but this talk. You realize, don't you, that whether we will it or not, it must inevitably leave us closer or—apart?" His voice dropped on the word, and continued in the same lower key; "We must try to be frank and keep open-minded."

"Yes," said Philippa, "and only to-day, this very afternoon, I heard a repetition of that story about you."

He ignored this remark and went on: "We may differ in opinion, but at bottom may I feel that you trust me, that you don't really mean what you intimated last week about my attitude toward her?"

Gilbert was leaning forward, his eyes were on her; she felt their intensity, and her heart beat. But this quickened pulse was not so much because of this, as at

a consciousness of her power over this man—a man strong and noteworthy. At the same instant came over her a desire to test this power, a desire touched with jealousy and personal pique. It was these surface motive causes, not Philippa's deeper nature, which decided her answer: "How can I be sure you are not deceiving yourself?"

Gilbert felt a nervous chill. He hesitated, and then slowly said, "If for no other reason, because of my feeling for you."

Her reply was quick. "Then, why do you hesitate to grant my wish? It is wholly for your good." She half believed it as she spoke. It was for his good; she would save him from grave indiscretion, if not from worse. It adds to our determination when we can discover an irreproachably moral sanction for our personal desires. The fact that she was receiving without surprise and so calmly his half declaration she did not notice. Gilbert did, and the whole import of her question rushed over him. He was silent, trying to catch some of the rapid succession of thoughts. She had known, then, that he cared; and on the answer to her question depended, she evidently felt, her ultimate answer to him. But what a question from the woman Gilbert loved! Intellectual hatred of its real irrelevancy, sense of its lack of sympathy, its misunderstanding of his best self, a heated desire to rouse her feelings and then sweep away this absurd and perverted reasoning—all these strove within him. He was still silent; then the seriousness of this close contact with another calmed him. He spoke quietly, but in a voice moved with feeling.

"I want," he said, "to be wholly frank with you, and with myself. I have thought over this whole matter from every side, and it comes to this. I *know*," his voice rang on the word, "that I owe it to Val, to all with whom I come into contact, that I should try

to help them; and her I feel I can help, and have helped. It is a matter of duty and ideals with me. You must——”

“Oh, stop!” she broke in with a gesture, “it hurts me to hear you speak of ideals and duty, as though they could be connected with a woman of that character! I know you’re generally right, but this time I feel *I* am. Won’t you grant me this sacrifice from your ambition, Mr. Carne? It’s for your own good—that’s why I urge it. And then”—her voice was less certain at this point—“you know in a friendship like ours everything depends on how we look at just such things.”

Gilbert did know, and for a moment the tragic inevitableness of this divergence between their attitudes, stopped his thought in the realization of the fact. He rose unconsciously and began to pace the room, the girl watching him meanwhile. He tried to think, but thoughts come confusedly to a mind overpowered by one reality. He loved the woman before him, he had attached to his dreams and ideals her image, and now she and they stood arrayed one against the other. He must choose. But at such a moment a man can not choose; he throws himself, he exhausts himself against the despotic necessity of choice. He looked up, saw her anxious gaze upon him, and realized how much he hated this persistent shrinking of hers from acknowledging and owning the true meaning of their relation. He came nearer, and stood over her with his hand upon the high carved back of her chair. The whole nervous intensity of his nature, controlled, yet vibrating, spoke in his voice, in his eyes fixed upon her.

“How can I reply,” he said, “so as to keep you my friend? Philippa, I *will* not believe this matter can come between us. Let us wait—let us each try to feel the other’s attitude through and through; as earnestly—*more* earnestly than our own. I will—so

will you, I know. We differ, honestly both of us, in our opinions about Valentine. Shall that stand between us? Surely not! We will wait and think about it for a time. If I am wrong, bear with me, and in time we may come to see it alike. Don't have it fixed and final in your mind, I beg of you. Please say that you will keep your mind open, and I will too."

The pleading notes of his voice, his troubled eyes, the agitation in his words, appealed to Philippa. But at the same time the concession in his speech, while it flattered her sense of power, impressed her as an indication of yielding. She would insist, and so carry the point; she felt it her duty.

"My mind is quite made up," she replied with gentle firmness, "but I'll be glad to wait until you see it as I do. Aren't you beginning to, a little, even now?"

Gilbert's face became set, the feeling passed out of it. The tone of his answer was impersonal, firm, incisive: "No; on the contrary I know I am right. I had hoped in time to bring you to see it. But I begin to feel that it is impossible."

He turned away, moving toward the upper end of the room. Philippa underwent a little shock of disappointment and pique. "If you would not be so obstinate and hard——" she began, but something like tears checked her.

It was at this moment that Mrs. Bentley, who had swept aside the uncertain resistance of Barry at the door, parted the curtains of the drawing room. She came forward quickly, shook hands cordially with Gilbert, and kissed Philippa upon the cheek. The tension in the atmosphere was of course plain to her, although it had expressed itself a little differently from what she might have hoped. Gilbert's face and manner were certainly self-possessed enough; it was in Philippa that Mrs. Bentley noticed a troubled agitation.

She dropped into a chair, asked for a cup of tea, and, while it was being made, talked on in her poised, gracious way.

"We hear praises of the Hamlet on every side, Mr. Carne," she said; "such an unusual run, though, must be a great strain."

"I do find it tiring," he replied.

"If it isn't asking too much, what will be the next production you make us?" Mrs. Bentley asked, who was too clever a woman to miss any chance of laying in conversational material.

"Next we shall present a couple of short plays, I think. One of them has a particularly fine part for Miss Leighton."

Valentine, of course, was billed under her maiden name.

"Ah, yes." Mrs. Bentley was courteously interested. "We think she is quite fascinating." She drifted off from this into chat with Philippa, and, Gilbert finding himself only called on at intervals for assent or dissent, had ten minutes or so for self-investigation. He glanced at Philippa with a feeling of leaden incredulity weighing him down. It was not only her total failure to understand that pained him; it was the sense that they had come to the parting of the ways. Gilbert had never refused to recognise and entertain a spontaneous feeling; this one, which another man would have throttled, or denied, or named by false names, he observed and knew.

Bound up with two crucial years of his life had been this love, and the ambition to win this girl; he now realized that it must cease to exist. He had never, it is true, so much loved her as loved the promise in her; his was, above all, a nature whose reason and intellect must be fully satisfied before emotion could govern it. In all his thoughts and dreams of Philippa it had been the future woman that he saw, noble and

ripe and sweet. Now he must face the fact that, whatever she might be, she was apparently separated from him by a fundamental lack of sympathy; that the woman who was to influence him in the future could not be one whose mental tissues were already hardening into conventional shapes.

He rose in the midst of these thoughts and took his leave. Philippa bade him good-bye in perfectly friendly fashion, but inwardly she associated him with a mortification. He had absolutely refused to confirm her mental picture of herself, and her attitude toward him. She stood up, a clear-eyed, graceful figure, tall and handsome, against the room's rich background; and it seemed to him as if he had never seen so fully every detail of her personality, the little inflexible smile, the bend of the head, the long hand she gave him for a moment, and even such a trifle as the bracelet which fell over the wrist. He went out of the room with this picture in his mind.

The two women preserved silence until they heard the front door shut.

"He's certainly a very brilliant fellow," commented Mrs. Bentley pensively, looking nowhere with intentness.

"Very," said Philippa, in an exact reproduction of the other woman's occasional light, hard tone. "I've no doubt he will be a great man. He has boundless self-confidence, and the highest possible opinion of himself."

"I'm rather glad to hear you say that," said Mrs. Bentley, promptly stepping into the breach, "because I've sometimes been afraid you might like him."

"O dear Mrs. Bentley!" declared Philippa; then she added seriously: "There's no one for whom I have a greater respect than Mr. Carne, and he's an excellent friend of mine; but he's utterly cold, and—oh, our

lives are so different——” She paused, and her shoulders expressively finished the sentence.

“I’m delighted you think so, Phil, I’m sure,” said Mrs. Bentley in a tone of much relief; “but then I might have known you wouldn’t do anything silly.”

“It would not be silly to care for Mr. Carne,” said Philippa, in a sudden reaction; “only, placed as I am——”

“That’s what I mean, dear,” said her friend.

There are disadvantages to clear-sightedness in respect of pain. Had Philippa died then and there, Gilbert could not have undergone a keener sense of loss. During the weeks following, the two sides of his nature rose up and battled with each other, and tired him out. On the one hand, was the strong feeling, natural, youthful, manly, which demands its happiness; and on the other, was that highly cultivated, never deadened faculty of seeing things as they are. Sometimes the one would lead him almost to her door, displaying a passionate strength he had not dreamed of, and telling itself fiercely that he could make her care, that he could overcome the obstacles, that he could not relinquish hope. Then there would rise to confront him his own watchful, clear-eyed nature and point to the truth, to their different lives and ideals, to their absolutely opposite standards, to his own ambitious nature, to the certain shipwreck of the future.

“I’ve wondered at Scott often and often,” he told himself wretchedly; “and such a marriage—say I could make her love me, and I *could*—would be madder than Scott’s. Oh, if I could only deceive myself and go ahead!”

The days went by. He observed himself, he thought of her, and knew that they two were not like Dick and Val, natures simple and emotional drifted over from the Elizabethan age, but very complex, very modern man and woman with infinite possibilities for ex-

quisite self-torture. Many men go through such suffering as Gilbert's after marriage, few before; because few are impersonal, few know themselves. The struggle had one effect: it roused his warmer nature. He was unconscious of it, but from this time forth, his dealings with his fellow-men had more of tenderness, less of merely scientific interest. He threw himself wholly, warmly, into the affairs of Dick and into the training of Valentine.

CHAPTER XXX

VALENTINE

THE Oracle had been the first among the magazines to publish favourable notices of the Hamlet. Maynard's critique had been crisp, clear, snappy, and thoroughly up to the latter-day standards of journalism. But this review, rather to Maynard's surprise, did not apparently strike Forsyth, the editor in chief, as sufficient to meet the occasion. In a later number there appeared a long, close, and scholarly analysis of the presentation under Mr. Forsyth's own signature. This was in itself a compliment, from a critic of his position and dignity; it was heightened by the laudatory tone of the essay, which was among the first to appreciate the high, intellectual value of Gilbert's work. After the Oracle, several monthlies of weight issued portraits and studies in varying degrees of criticism; but Forsyth's was the first from which Gilbert learned that he had made a real impression.

He was naturally grateful for the encouragement, and, seeing no reason why he should not say so, took an early opportunity to call on Mr. Forsyth. This he did one Sunday evening early in December, just as Hamlet was entering upon the last week. In the editor's warm, rich, and comfortable study the two men spent a satisfying evening in dramatic and literary discussion, Gilbert finding the most acute enjoyment in the intellectual exercise which was afforded him by contact with a mind at once so learned and so flexible

as Forsyth's. On his part, the elder man (as he said very freely and frankly afterward) gathered from the conversation grounds for a new belief in the rising generation.

"I used to think," he declared, "that *les jeunes* were all like Maynard and Forbes, but I feel better. The divine spark is still alive. If any one can revive the old standards, it is that young Carne. He has the muscles, the brains, the sensitiveness, and the capacity for work—*Deo gratia!*"

Gilbert, wearied with the long strain, gained a new stimulus from the interview. It was two o'clock when he finally rose to take his departure.

"I can't tell you, sir, what the evening's been," he said. "After the daily push and pull, I have been strengthened and refreshed as by a bath. Some, at least, of my mental dust has gone."

"I'm sure I'm glad, Carne," Forsyth replied, lifting his shaggy eyebrows. "I've enjoyed it, too, immensely!" He seemed lost for a second in hesitation, and as Gilbert moved toward the door called him back.

"By the way," he said abruptly, "that young Cushing, is he a friend of yours?"

Gilbert quickly turned, and then stepped back within the circle of lamplight. He looked down anxiously upon the editor's rough-hewn face, heavy beard, and sharp, steady eyes. "Yes," he responded, "we were boys in the same town."

"Has he stamina?" was the editor's sudden query. Gilbert's hesitation lasted only half a second. "I have always believed so," he replied. Forsyth pushed out his lips in an unconscious mannerism, and fell to twisting his rough beard.

"Now, I'll tell you," he said slowly, "I used to like the boy. He has talent and colour; his verses are charming, and he was so much less self-conscious than

the rest of my crew down there in the office. Well, of course, he began badly. He came down there full of self-importance, fancying he was a composite photograph of all French heroes. To be frank with you, Carne, that's not a pose I fancy; and young Cushing's appeared to be a particularly rank case of selfishness——"

"Not quite that," Gilbert interposed quietly. "I see just how it must strike you, sir; but that's not wholly true. There is a good deal of extenuation."

Forsyth's eyes twinkled. "I once published some articles of Randolph Scott's, and I know him slightly," he said grimly. "I won't deny, Carne, that I found him hard to reconcile with your Ophelia. But, still," his grim expression broke into a smile, which Gilbert could not help reflecting.

"Well, sir?"

"Well," Forsyth continued, serious again; "as I said, though I liked Cushing, this business did not prepossess me exactly to start with. Then Maynard gets to be his dry nurse. Now you know Maynard—he is a most brilliant fellow, and a valuable member of my staff. Just the same, between us two, he is corrupt to the core—no other term expresses it. He stands the life he leads simply because he has a constitution of steel. Now, young Cushing has *not* a constitution of steel, and there seems to be no doubt that Maynard and he have been what the boys call 'whooping it up' pretty steadily for the last three months."

Mr. Forsyth tipped his cigar ash into the grate; Gilbert stood silent.

"Now, I'm not telling you this," Mr. Forsyth said, giving him a keen glance, "from philanthropic motives, wholly. I don't play missionary to my office, but I have to see that the work comes up to a certain level. As I said, Maynard is made of steel; whatever he may do, his work is always up to time. But young

Cushing isn't. Now, to give you an example," he went on, briskly pulling at his cigar. "When he came on, it was with an understanding that he was to furnish us every fortnight with one of his poems or those graceful little papers of his to head the Literary Shop section of the paper. This wasn't office work, but individual—my own idea, to give the boy a chance outside the daily rut. Of course, it was to his own advantage, as the things were good for book form afterward. Now, during the last six weeks he's had an excuse ready twice, and we've had to fill up the space in a hurry, to our loss. The last thing he gave us was so careless and so poor that I put it in under protest, simply because I'd nothing else ready. You understand?"

"Oh, yes," Gilbert replied.

"I thought you might give him just a friendly warning." Forsyth rose and shook himself, adding with decision: "You know, Carne, I can't have that sort of thing on the Oracle. We're on the top of the heap just now, and it's a delicately balanced position. I can't temporize with poor work. You'll mention it to him?"

Gilbert nodded, and, after hearty leave-takings on both sides, he went home. The cold, bleak street formed a background to his reflections; the winter wind seemed to brace his thoughts and make them strenuous and firm. Forsyth's account was not more than he had suspected, perhaps; but he had not supposed it so well known. Valentine had once or twice let him see that Dick's intimacy with Maynard and his set had grown rather than diminished since her own return to the theatre; but Val was too devoted, too loyal to hint at this as a disadvantage. He could only hope that Forsyth exaggerated, and that it was but temporary. Dick must do better; he must catch some of Gilbert's own stern determination to work.

When he mentioned it to his friend—and he did so very carelessly and tactfully—Dick tried to hide his evident shock of surprise under a boisterous outburst of laughter. As a matter of fact, however, Forsyth's disapproval was no small matter. Dick might join with Maynard in poking fun at the elder man's rough, abrupt ways and strong views; but at bottom both Maynard and he respected Forsyth's position in the literary world. It was a pet affectation of Maynard and his set to ignore sound work and acknowledged ability, and find genius in some eccentricity of the moment; but Maynard handed his copy in to the editor of the Oracle and was proud of his praise nevertheless. Dick had rather plumed himself on being a favourite; he had held imaginary conversations with Forsyth, in which the elder man had commended and admired Dick's independence and thorough freedom. Gilbert's intimation was therefore mortifying and unforeseen.

Dick nursed a sense of injury. One afternoon he took a train out of town and roamed the fields, pursued by a number of impatient, discouraged thoughts. His little book of poems had received but slight notice. Here was Forsyth complaining of his later work! After all, it was a deadly world, which had no sense of beauty; it did not heed the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. If he had only lived in the old Greek or Italian days, when life was simple, free and beautiful in itself! These regrets occupied Dick's mind till others less definite superseded them. Among these was the sense of having failed to create an impression. Then there rose in his imagination the picture of the crowded theatre, and Val's figure holding it silent. Val—who did not know the difference between Ben Jonson and the lexicographer, or rather (and here the point went home), who had not known it yesterday. Who could say what she had learned since yesterday? It was a new thing to be afraid of Val.

All the long afternoon he rambled over the brown, frosted earth, or sat on a fence watching a yellow sunset. As he grew chilled and stiff in body, his mind glowed with fiercer enthusiasm and keener vision. And then his injuries began to grow rhythmical, his disappointment to frame itself into phrases and epithets. He felt in his pockets and produced a bit of paper, and then and there scribbled a little poem, the best he had done for many a day. It relieved his mind of a load, and, by the force of reaction, he took the train back in a tension of high spirits. It was late as he rode up Broadway; the arcs of electric light over the theatres reminded him of Gilbert. Poor Gilbert, toiling and drudging! Dick, his veins still throbbing from that exquisite glow of inspiration, smiled a pitying, triumphant smile.

Next morning, when he handed over the verses to Forsyth, he was gladdened by the editor's shrewd upward glance of pleasure and surprise. Forsyth only said, "That'll do very well, Cushing," but Dick was re-established to himself by that glance at least. He swaggered out, was picked up by Maynard, who carried him off, much as a strong, good-humoured, irresistible brother carries off a child on his shoulder. Dick drifted into the office at noon the following day with a story about the "grippe," which was not altogether untrue, as he had caught a heavy cold in his wanderings about the fields. It might have been trifling, had not the combined excitements produced in him a form of nervous exhaustion in which he was desperately depressed. For a fortnight he could hardly bear to have Val out of his sight, and the girl's patience and tenderness were taxed to their uttermost. She did not fail, for the gift of loving was hers in the highest degree; often he wondered at her steadiness.

"Val, I must plague you to death!" he cried in a black mood. "Why do you stand it?"

"Oh, my dearest!" cried Val reproachfully, her face intense with love.

"Well, it's true, isn't it?" he declared fiercely. "I do plague you—and—and—I can't *bear* to have you away from me!"

He turned his sensitive face up to hers and lost himself in her look, in the sense of her nearness to him. Some change was undoubtedly at work in his attitude toward her, exactly what it was he could not have told. He took to coming with her to the theatre, hiding himself in some corner of the house, and watching her, with the touch of delight in her mere coming upon the stage. Dick was, of course, in a highly nervous condition at this time, physically relaxed, and a little morbid. He had lost, for the time being, his fondness for frolic and society, and, when at all turned in upon himself, Dick was always difficult and hypersensitive. During one particularly black time, when he was sitting in a back row during a *matinée*, he was disturbed by the subdued chatter of a couple of women. He had been feeling wretchedly all day, his nerves tight strung and a beaten ache in every limb, and this little cross-fire of whispers was more than he could stand. He coughed peremptorily, shuffled his feet, and thereby turned the attention of the delinquents to himself. Catching their eyes, he glared upon them, and produced the effect not of a rebuke, but of rudeness. However a woman may err in courtesy, the man who attempts to remind her of it, is saddled with a double load. The whispering continued, and this time with personal intent.

"Yes; they say he has some talent, but bad habits, of course."

"A perfect ne'er-do-weel, I heard; just a mill-stone round her neck!"

Dick heard every word. He affected not to acknowledge to himself that he had winced. Those asi-

nine, impertinent women, he would have liked to tell them what he thought of them, interrupting a fine performance with their chatter! A wave of general hatred of the audience swept over him. Meanwhile, he held the chance remark at arm's length with all his might, conscious of its power, should it spring upon his soul. His interest in the play had evaporated; and by and bye he rose and strolled out. "A ne'er-do-weel"—was that really what the world thought? "Just a millstone round her neck!" The words were dreadful; the thought gripped Dick fiercely, shook him with a sort of despair. He stood in the lobby idly, battling with it, when luck had it that he saw Maynard across the street. With a shout he sprang after and overtook his friend. That midnight he returned home, for the first time drunk. Val cried bitterly; but, poor child, she was neither surprised nor shocked, for the experience was not new: her stepfather had been a hard drinker. In the morning she made Dick promise, and then devoted her attention to encouraging him, for his condition of raging humiliation and self-upbraiding positively frightened her. Dick recovered in due time, and became almost, if not quite, his old self, though a sensitive spot remained in his soul, from which he was constantly warding his own touch. He went alone this winter to Chambers's suppers and Sanderson's "little parties." Val would not go. "I don't care about it," she would say. Dick could not fail to realize the difference between their young overwhelming passion and the present feeling. He loved her and clung to her. When they talked together he did not use his tone of tender patronage. He was conscious of a difference. One Sunday Gilbert met him and asked him how the promised play was progressing. Dick answered at random, but it was inwardly with a feeling of dismay. He had really forgotten about the play; the fragments of Act I lay on his desk un-

touched. With one of his flashes of energy he rushed home at once. Sanderson had taken a box at a music hall the night before, followed by a supper; and Sanderson was noted for his cellar. Dick's head and eyes were heavy. Instinctively, on entering he asked for Val. She was shut in her little room upstairs, studying.

Dick ran lightly up the stair and tapped at the closed door. By and bye, growing impatient, he tapped again. She did not expect him, and he meant to surprise her when she opened the door. But Val did not come; she spoke from within, evidently thinking it was the maid.

"All right, Mary," said her voice; "I know it's four o'clock, but this must be done, whether I'm tired or not."

Dick stood with his hand on the knob. He was checked, almost involuntarily, by some indefinite impulse, from entering the room. He turned and went softly downstairs again.

He went straight to his desk and began to sort his papers energetically. Dust had collected; he blew it away with a quick, irritable breath. He abstracted the fragments of Act I, reread them, his face wearing an expression of frowning determination. Then he straightened up, dipped his pen, and started in. He wrote two lines, and dashed his pen through them in a fury. He began deliberately to try and clear his head of this clogging, bothersome mist, in which all sorts of irrelevant thoughts rioted, dim and fantastic. But the effort only served to clear the ideas themselves, and the people, the scenes in his play faded and faded. Sanderson's wine—the music-hall songs—Maynard—Forsyth's cold face as he had last seen it—Val upstairs, studying and studying—Val on the stage as Ophelia—Val, her passionate face near his own, her eyes—Val—up there alone, studying and studying!

His pen wandered off and took to making scrolls on the margin; his eyes stared into vacancy.

When Val came downstairs she saw him seated, his head resting back against the chair, his eyes closed. She came toward him anxiously with her quick step. The thin face was gray and drawn.

"Why, Dicky!" she began.

Without opening his eyes, Dick put an arm around her and drew her close until his hot forehead rested against her dress. "Val, O Val!" he exclaimed brokenly. His voice vibrated with apprehension and doubt.

"My poor, darling boy!" She did not understand, but bent her head down against his. And Dick, chilled with a sweeping helplessness, realized that her voice was that of a strong woman.

CHAPTER XXXI

ONE FALLS

THE success of the little plays which were produced after Hamlet was sufficient to give both Gilbert and Valentine an assured position before the public. Each was well acted, but Val's work in the second served to convince the critic that her Ophelia was not merely a flash in the pan. She had the part of a peasant girl, rough, passionate, dogged, uncouth; and it was a lesson in dramatic art to see Val disguise her natural grace under the mental and material habiliments of such a character. The forty minutes during which she was on the stage was a period of strain which many women in the audience felt in their own muscles when they rose to go home. It was true her work had less polish than in the Ophelia. The critics had something to say, and justly, about her faults of articulation and delivery, but one and all declared themselves in the presence of a commanding talent. In view of her striking presentation, Gilbert had hardly expected much notice to be taken of his own subordinate part, but, to his surprise, it received a more unqualified praise than the Hamlet. "The care, completeness, finish, and self-restraint which Mr. Carne bestowed upon his part," exclaimed one enthusiast, "can not be too highly commended."

It became evident that these productions would fill out the balance of the season, and Gilbert was already being interviewed with regard to his plans for the

next year. He despatched long letters and newspaper clippings to Alice, and received hearty congratulations from her in return: words that caused him to sigh; they seemed to come from such an utter stranger. The brisk, curt, independent tone of Alice's letters, the glimpses she gave him of a life so businesslike, so competently managed, were hard to reconcile with his last memories of her. She wrote him of partial successes during the last year, which led him to make the suggestion to her that she should exhibit some of her canvases in New York. Gilbert was himself anxious to see her work, and volunteered to undertake the details of the exhibition. His prominent position at this time made the arrangements very easy. Alice agreed with enthusiasm, and the date was fixed. About that time, however, a series of events drove the affair out of Gilbert's head. January found him very tired, but more at peace than he had been for some time past. He had seen nothing of Philippa Cushing, who seemed to have been caught up and swept away in the whirl of city existence with its rush and clamour of occupations; and when he heard of her it was as of a stranger. Often he thought and wondered if she would grow tired of "living in the vestibule," as he had once phrased it, and would ever open the door and pass through out of the tumult, into the rich, tranquil, satisfying mansion of the mind and spirit. Perhaps, if she did, they might meet again, and in that stiller atmosphere once more touch each other with sympathy. Gilbert always hoped; for to him human character was so full of hope, and life so broad in its ebb and flow, that all things were possible.

One evening, after the play, he stepped across to the Opera House with Blakeley, to hear the last act of *Faust*.

Without being exactly musical, Gilbert was intensely susceptible to music. After the strain and

tumult of his own work just concluded, the violins seemed to touch him with an infinite caress. The singers were perhaps the finest in the world at that moment, and, after the long stress and agony of the tragedy, were yielding themselves wholly to the triumph of its end. The trio began, with its uplifted swing, led by the clear, rising notes of one perfect voice, and swept him out of himself as if by a strong wind. It rose and rose to its climax, and in his sensitive state he went utterly with it, as he experienced the highest thrill that it is possible for music to give, when one seems to have forgotten that it comes from the governed human throat or fingers, and is conscious that it has given expression to one's own personal, intimate, spiritual life, loss, or achievement.

As the curtain fell, and Gilbert sighed and relaxed, he became conscious of eyes upon him, looked up, and saw Philippa in a neighbouring box, her head turned in his direction. She was watching the emotion in his face, with an expression of incredulous surprise in her own. He bowed to her, and slipped out ahead of her party.

The winter had brought him a fuller social life, of a nature that was agreeable to his taste. His rooms became the meeting place for his intimate friends; many discussions arose there by which Gilbert was interested and benefited. He liked men better than he used, and they liked him. By strenuously avoiding general society, he had the more time to give to his friends. Dick took to coming quite in his old way, full as ever of his plans and fancies. In past days Gilbert would have wrestled mightily with Dick on the Maynard question; would have argued, reasoned, commanded. But the last year had changed him. He said nothing unless Dick gave him the opening; but the poet was always welcomed, and in Gilbert's presence gave the loose rein to his exaltations or discouragement.

ments. Dick in these days was thin, voluble, and uncertain; his clothes were eccentric, his hair wild as ever. But Gilbert was always conscious of a dark room in his friend's mind, on the threshold of which Dick's foot faltered and hurried past.

"Gib, I believe in transmigration," he announced one afternoon; "I believe I was once a centaur—De Guérin's, if you like—and lived free in the woods. I remember the place: a brook moved through low meadows toward a group of pines that stood against the yellow sky." There came a pause. Dick sighed.

"What is it, Dicky?"

"I was thinking," said Dick dreamily. "Gib, will the play do?"

"I'm sure it will," said Gilbert cheerfully; "but I can tell more definitely when you get a little more done to show me."

"H'm! And even if it's no good, Val could carry it through?"

Gilbert nodded. Dick threw out his arm fiercely upon the sofa where he lay. "It will be good!" he cried. "It shall be! Just so soon as I get time, I'll set to work in earnest."

"Of course," Gilbert said; "no hurry!" He looked quickly at the drawn, feverish face.

"Val," said Dick fretfully, "Val works like a horse." He turned his head into the cushions with a petulant movement, and there was a long silence.

About the beginning of February Dick caught fresh cold. He had never been wholly rid of one he caught in November, and with this addition he speedily developed a sharp attack of pneumonia. His condition grew rapidly critical, and the doctor told Gilbert that the patient's constitution was not naturally robust.

A period of great anxiety for Val was, however, followed by one of relief. Contrary to expectation,

Dick threw off the disease rather quickly, and to her inexperienced eyes his extreme weakness was only a natural result of the illness. Gilbert was not so sure; when day after day passed by and Dick gained no strength, his face grew grave. He ventured to say to Val, "I wish he would rally a little faster."

Val looked up quickly with a glance of apprehension. "Why," she cried, "the pneumonia's all gone, isn't it? He's only weak. Aren't people always weak after things like that? He has no congestion at all; the doctor said so. He's just got to get his strength now."

Gilbert nodded. He found it very hard to tell her that in his opinion Dick's condition was more serious now than a week back. He feared the effect of added strain on her. He would offer to sit with Dick, but Val rarely accepted. "He'd rather have me," was her answer. "We like to be together."

Her love, her devotion—the thought of these sometimes made Gilbert's eyes moist. What a rich nature was hers! He would recall Philippa's remarks with indignation; he saw the Valentine of the future giving them the lie.

But after the days had gone by and Dick was losing vitality rather than gaining it, fear began to creep upon Val. She spent every moment with him, dashing down to her work at the theatre and rushing home again. In her wide eyes there was a piteous, haunted look, under which Gilbert could not be tranquil. He spoke to her bravely, encouragingly always, but the time came when she could no longer deceive herself.

Dick had been nearly four weeks ill, when one day Gilbert came out of his room. Val followed in silence until they reached the sitting room, where she suddenly turned upon him.

"Gilbert," she said; "Gilbert, is he worse?"

"He has always been seriously ill, Val," Gilbert replied huskily.

"*Seriously!*" Val repeated. "Yes, I know—of course. But is he worse? What does the doctor really think?" She suddenly seized Gilbert's arm and shook it. "Gib, is he in danger?"

He looked down upon her face, quivering in its agony of dread. His own voice trembled as he answered: "Val, the doctor has always thought him *very* ill. It is his heart. His weakness comes from that, and—they do not give us much hope."

"His heart?" she repeated, stupefied. The thought Gilbert had suggested seemed almost to suffocate her. She broke out in a torrent. "Die? He can't, *he can't!* Go away like that and leave me alone? O Gib, it's impossible! He *can't!* Just think how alone—oh, how *alone* I should be!"

"Poor Val!" Gilbert said, turning his eyes from her.

She went on rapidly, high-pitched and shrill, her hands locked and twisted together. "Why, Gib, he's young! Dick's not twenty-seven! People don't die at twenty-seven. And the congestion is all gone—the doctor told me so himself. Don't you see? He *can't* go! He can't leave me. We ought to be together. We haven't anybody—anybody but each other!" She swayed, and the sobs broke and shook her from head to foot. Gilbert was afraid that Dick might hear. He went across to where she stood with her face covered, and laid his hand steadily on her shoulder.

She seemed at once to grasp the meaning of his touch, and battled fiercely with her tears, gaining in a moment or two enough control to look at him.

"You know he mustn't see you've been crying; he mustn't be excited," Gilbert warned her, and she nodded.

"I must go back," she whispered; "he wants me."

"Can you, Val? You can't!" he said incredulously, for he knew he could not.

One of her quick nods answered him. She walked once or twice through the room, then, without another word to Gilbert, went upstairs, clinging to the balustrade. There was a pause; then he heard her voice, clear, light, metallic, "Here I am, dearest!"

Gilbert drew a long breath. It seemed to him impossible that a little less than two years ago he had witnessed her childlike escapade at dinner. He went slowly downstairs and out into the street. It was so pitiful: the contrast between their life as it was, and as it should have been—these two children turned against the current, fighting it, and finally swept down! Like Val, he found it impossible to believe that Dick—Dick, always so full of vitality, so peculiarly connected with ideas of life—should be on the edge of the silence.

At the beginning of Dick's illness, Gilbert had, of course, telegraphed Mrs. Cushing in Bishopton. (The mother and son had only had one interview during the year; that had been a painful one, and was followed by a silence.) In reply he had received a letter from the Bishopton physician, telling him that a severe attack of influenza had prostrated Mrs. Cushing, and that, as she could not possibly come on, it had been thought best to conceal the information. To this Gilbert had replied several times; now, on his way home he despatched another telegram. The answer told him that Mrs. Cushing was still too weak to be informed of her son's condition.

Several days passed, and no change took place in Dick's illness. Almost imperceptibly he seemed to lose a little ground each day. Val hardly ever left him. Most of the day he lay with his eyes shut, but at times he opened them and smiled on her. He wanted her near him all the while, within his reach.

Sometimes, just after he had taken a stimulant, he would talk a little. At one of these times, he drew her hand, which had been lying between his own, up against his lips. Then a curious, grave expression came over his face.

"Darling, of course you know that I meant we should be married."

It was the first time he had said anything to suggest that he understood there was no future. Val laid her forehead quietly down upon the bed. Dick touched her yellow hair.

"Dearest, I'm sorry. I was entirely to blame. It was my fault. Will you forgive me?"

"Hush—sh!" sobbed Val, without raising her head. "No one was to blame. It was no one's fault—it just happened. I won't forgive you for all my happiness, beloved."

This brought the smile back to Dick's face. But by and bye he said in a regretful tone, "For your sake I wish we had waited."

She nodded, and he lay a long time with closed eyes. But when, thinking he was asleep, she tried gently to withdraw her hand, he feebly held it closer to his lips.

That week was the most memorable in Val's life. All possible strain had passed out of their relation to each other. They were in touch so exquisitely close that Dick could convey his idea or desire to her by the mere lifting of an eyelid. The little moments in which he was able to speak were charged full of tenderness, of intimacy, of solemnity. Dick seemed to have gained a certain insight which he had not owned in health. "I wish," he told her once, "that I had worked at the play instead of wasting my time. I would like you to have a part I had made."

They never definitely spoke of separation, but it was evidently in Dick's mind. He talked to her most

often of herself, her vocation, and with such a delicate sympathy! There were sentences which he uttered during that period in regard to her work which rang in Valentine's ears to the last hour of her life. "You are so strong, beloved; keep your work strong. O Val, I am sure strength is the chief thing. You and I have cared so much, so much! Now you will be able to let all that caring pass into your work. People will be glad of my Val; she will give them noble thoughts. . . . No, I am not weak, dear; I am just quietly thinking. I am glad it is you who will be great." He turned his eyes upon her, gleaming with love.

"My dearest, if you had not been ill, you would too——"

"No, no!" He spoke exultingly, half raising himself on the pillow. "It is *you—you* will be famous, and I am glad. It is just right. But no one will love you better than I. O Val, I love you with all my heart and soul!" His voice broke, and died out in weak murmurings: "My darling—Val—my love!"

He lay still, with wide eyes upon hers, until their two spirits seemed to meet in the silence, and the love in both faces mounted and mounted into exaltation. Could Valentine forget such moments? It was her salvation that she could not.

All that she owed to her ambition, to her surroundings thereafter; all that she owed Gilbert, and it was much, would have had comparatively little effect upon her character, had it not been for these last utterances of a young, passionate love. A woman of intensely strong feelings, at the most susceptible age, and after the most forcing experiences of life, she may be said to have received at this time, in a sense, her spiritual baptism. What Gilbert had dreaded for her, and what is to be dreaded for every nature like hers, was a craving for renewed emotional experience. But Val had

touched the height, and, given her work to hold by, such a degeneration was not probable.

The long hours which they spent together, Dick and Valentine, their hands together, their eyes upon each other, perhaps not speaking, but intensely close, are hours vouchsafed to but few men and women. A high beauty touched this time—remorse for wrongdoing, new aspiration for that future which to one of them was so pitifully closed.

There came a day when Dick seemed very much brighter and better; he had even joked, and Val came rushing down the stairs to tell Gilbert of the fact. When he saw her several hours later at the theatre, she was still cheerful, and told him Dick was resting quietly. And when Gilbert went to the house, as usual, the following morning, he learned that Dick had died in the night.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE TWO WOMEN MEET, AND GILBERT PAUSES

THE news reached Philippa the same afternoon. She had come in tired out from a long round of calls, and had found the note awaiting her. She tore open the envelope and read:

"MY DEAR MISS CUSHING: I thought it right you should know that your cousin Dick died at a few minutes after four this morning.

Yours,

"GILBERT CARNE."

Philippa stood quietly by the hall table, folding the note mechanically and replacing it in the envelope. The colour slowly faded from her face, but Mrs. Bentley, who came in just behind her, did not see this pallor. She glanced instead inquiringly at the note, as the girl spoke.

"Dick is dead."

"Not really?" Mrs. Bentley said incredulously; then, in a graver tone: "Well, well, I suppose it's about the best thing that could have happened. He had completely done for himself, poor fellow! Is that note from her?" she added, with a touch of curiosity. A little inarticulate sound came from Philippa's throat, at which Mrs. Bentley glanced up swiftly. "Philippa! Are you *feeling* it? My dear child, I had no idea! I beg your pardon."

Philippa forced herself to smile forgiveness; then

THE TWO WOMEN MEET, GILBERT PAUSES 315

turned, and in silence went upstairs to her own room.

She had heard little of Dick's illness, and had had no idea at any time that it was serious. Thus the news was a shock in itself, and brought back a rush of memories to her mind which the last year's busy life had crowded out. She sat quietly in her own room, still holding Gilbert's note, and for a long, long time the past days held her attention: her intimacy with the dead man, and the joy it had given her; Gilbert, and the new ideas which he had added to her life; and then, following these thoughts, the whole affair of their recent misunderstanding came before her. She knew Gilbert would feel this death, and she was sorry for his loss. Then there came to her inner eye the figure of that slender woman with the strong, intense face and restless gray eyes—that Valentine, who moved and spoke and was like a woman of the past. What did it mean to her? Philippa's tissues, mental and moral, had not been so long hardened that she could not feel a stab of genuine pity for the error and grief of these two lives. All the more she seemed to feel it, in that they had been ruled, she knew, by forces outside her own solar system; by strong emotion, which had never touched her own life. Under the influence of this pity, Philippa for the first time saw Gilbert's interest in Valentine in something approximating its true light.

The question of her own course puzzled her. Her first impulse had been to go at once to the house where Dick lay dead; her second, however, was to hesitate. Schooled as she had lately been in the diffidence of her class, and in its dread of taking the initiative in any doubtful course, her final decision was that it would not do. Mrs. Bentley had been horrified at the bare idea; not from moral, but from social grounds; and had argued very justly that such a step could do

Dick no good, but might lead to undesirable overtures on the part of Valentine.

"Had you known he was so ill, and then gone to see him, I should have said nothing," she declared truthfully, with that extraordinary mixture of sense and of hardness which characterized her opinions; "for then you might have done some good. But now what is the use? And don't you see how it will look? That actress will simply presume upon it in a way that may be *very* disagreeable."

Philippa hesitated, feeling that there was an argument somewhere, yet not knowing where to look for it, in the face of this real common sense.

"My dear, if you had been able to do your cousin some good I would not have urged this side of what people would say," Mrs. Bentley went on, kissing Philippa lightly on the forehead. "You know that I believe in trying to do good if one can. But I must really refuse to let you be mixed up with this sort of people unnecessarily. You must have more knowledge of the world, my dear."

And before this axiom Philippa, as usual, succumbed, and tried to put the matter out of her thoughts. Surely all was well when Mrs. Bentley told her how much she had gained, during the last year, "from meeting people you know." Had Philippa fully grasped that her friend's philosophy of life implied that ten minutes' chatter of Brown, Jones, or Robinson was a greater aid to knowledge than a page of Emerson or Goethe, a sense of humour might have kept her from implicit faith in such an authority; but if people only state their convictions in a tone of sufficient decision, they will find plenty to accept them as judges of life and manners. Mr. and Mrs. Bentley were adepts, in a well-bred way, at this brass-band fashion of blaring out the music of softer-toned instruments.

The girl tried to be satisfied with herself as of old, but the death of Dick had roused her sincere thoughts and feelings. The weeks moved on, and she was still not wholly at ease, still vaguely desirous of making some definite effort in some direction, she hardly knew in what. It was this feeling undoubtedly which led her, on the morning when she was much startled by receiving a visit from Valentine. There was one second's hesitation, one instant's shrinking, perhaps because of the subdued curiosity in the eye of Barry as he delivered the card. Then Philippa went quietly downstairs, with that numb, uplifted sense of crisis which underlay a very natural nervousness. What could Miss Leighton want with her? Nothing trifling, surely; and if nothing trifling, then the interview might be one in which she would be stirred more than her newly acquired knowledge of the world should allow. She went forward into the drawing room with a conventional greeting crystallized upon her lips. She became at once conscious of the presence of Valentine, outwardly but a tall woman in black, by that curious riveting of the attention which is granted only to strong and magnetic personalities. The two women met in the centre of the room with an evasion of the customary hand clasp, and then sat down in chairs some feet apart. Their eyes encountered one another inquiringly.

"I should not have troubled you, Miss Cushing," Valentine began, holding out a little package which she carried, "only I did not want to give *these* to a stranger to deliver."

"Ah, yes," Philippa said, and took the package, still with a glance of inquiry.

"They are letters of yours, a photograph," went on Valentine steadily, "which I found among your cousin's papers. I was sure he would wish these returned to you."

Philippa's hand rested uncertainly on the package as her low "Thank you" reached Valentine. During the pause she watched her hostess with those strange eyes which Philippa found so hard to quit with her own. Her manner had a gentle distance, but was perfectly simple and natural. She was not one to feel any uneasiness from such a meeting.

"I am very much obliged to you," Philippa said, untying the string around the little package, and rapidly laying aside the few letters on top. "Yes, these are mine, and this——" she paused to look at the photograph. It was one of herself, Gilbert, and Dick, taken during that first summer in Maine. She sat in the centre like a queen, the two young men at her feet. Three happy faces looked out of the picture. Some impulse stirred in Philippa, and, sweeping away all diffidence, caused her to bend forward and touch the other's dress with a movement of pure womanliness. Wondering at herself, she said tenderly, "I am so very sorry." Valentine's face quivered, she murmured an indistinct reply, and there was a pause, during which the touch of sympathy made the interview easier to the two women. Val, when she spoke, used quite another voice and manner.

"I am so glad to meet you, Miss Cushing, for I have heard so much of you. Gilbert Carne told me often of you and your plans, and the work you are going to do for the poor. I know enough about poor children to thank you for your splendid idea. It's a work I should love to help myself—if I ever could."

"Oh!" cried Philippa, the colour flooding her face as she made a gesture of denial; "I fear—I'm afraid—that is—you are mistaken. Did not Mr. Carne tell you that I had given up that idea long ago? I found," she went on, bracing herself by the familiar words, "that I could not afford such a work, in the first place; and, in the second, that many people con-

sidered it quixotic and unwise. The good it might do, you see, is so very doubtful."

"No," Val answered, "Gilbert did not tell me that. But are you so sure it is unwise? Did Gilbert advise you to give it up? Forgive me, but it seems such a pity."

"I have not seen Mr. Carne lately," Philippa began; then, she did not know why, but an instinctive trust in the other drew from her the rest in hurried words. "You see, we had a misunderstanding, and I have not talked with him since."

Valentine opened her eyes. "A misunderstanding—with Gilbert? You quarrelled with Gilbert?" cried she, with a little gesture. "Oh, that is why—but Gilbert is so gentle."

She looked anxiously at Philippa, who shook her head. "I think he can be very hard, Miss Leighton."

"You quarrelled," Valentine repeated, as if she found it hard to understand. Then she looked across at Philippa with a touch of her exquisite smile. "I really can not believe it."

"It is true, nevertheless."

"But not finally, surely. You will meet and be friends again?"

"I doubt it very much."

"You mean it is a real division between you?"

"I think——" said Philippa firmly, "that is—he thinks so."

Val thrust her head forward in her intense way, which seemed to cast aside the fact that they were strangers, and to dwell simply on this problem. "But if it is only a misunderstanding—— You were intimate friends, I know, for I gathered as much from him. And Gilbert is such a friend! Did he never use to *help* you as he does me?"

Here was an opening for pique, for pride, for injured dignity to utter itself in denials. But Philippa

met the eyes of this unusual woman and answered the simple truth.

"Yes, he did help me."

"Oh, then," said Valentine with an earnestness and fervour that were all her own; "I know what that means. You can't be helped by Gilbert and let him go like that! Tell me, since you parted you have missed him, have you not? there have been times when you have needed his help? It seems to me there are so few people who have got life into such a good perspective as Gilbert—and we women do need a sense of proportion. He insists always on the important things; he is never deflected into thinking this or that better worth while than full life and sincere work. You've felt that, haven't you?"

"I suppose so." The words came from Philippa reluctantly, but with the ring of truth. Yes, she had missed, in the tumult and glare of these latter months, the voice and guidance of her friend. Both were silent for a moment, and when Philippa spoke, it was with an abruptness that was almost tactless.

"But you," she said, "what are you going to do?"

"I?" replied Val quietly. "Oh, work." She rose, and tendered her hand to Philippa, who grasped it.

"I must go," Val said. "Some day you will send for Gilbert and be friends with him again?"

"Perhaps," Philippa answered.

The interview had been very short. Yet, as Philippa watched the actress's tall figure walk down the street, she became conscious for the first time of her real position. She stood indeed in the vestibule of life; and this Valentine—was she speaking to her from within the house? Not Gilbert, with all his words, had so convinced her of the value of ideals. And what were her ideals? She must try henceforth to think and know.

THE TWO WOMEN MEET, GILBERT PAUSES 321

It chanced that this very day was one spent by Gilbert in the most exhausting rehearsal and detail.

When finally released he turned his face homeward, it was with relief in the thought of a quiet moment.

The day had been gray and sullen, threatening snow; it was nearly five when he reached his rooms. Stumbling wearily into the passage, Gilbert caught sight of great shapes and bulky wooden oblongs piled one upon the other in the narrow space. Wondering, he felt for a match, and lit the gas jet above his head. With the flash of the light came the recollection what they must be. Alice's pictures, of course! He had completely forgotten them during the last month's anxiety.

The sight of the wooden cases, boldly directed with staring repetitions of his own name, suggested a diversion to Gilbert, tired as he was. He had been dreading the thoughts he should have to face quietly alone in his room. So he set briskly to work to unpack the cases, taking each picture out and setting it aside without examination. When all were done and the passageway strewn with laths and splinters, Gilbert lit his study lights, set the canvases, large and small, on the floor against his bookcase, and dropped contemplatively into his big chair.

The face of Randolph Scott suddenly greeted him, with formal eyes seeming to meet his own. Gilbert gave a half laugh and an exclamation, then fell to study of the portrait, which was a half-length boldly executed in oils. His eye wandered to the adjoining canvas, a view near Fontainebleau; to the next, a peasant's head; and so on round the room, slowly at first, then more quickly, as if seeking something. His gaze returned to meet that of Scott, which was cold and questioning. Gilbert shifted in his chair and sighed. It was hard for him to acknowledge his disappointment, but he had expected work of a different

1

order from that which met his eye. These pictures were good, no doubt, not eccentric, handled with firmness; but they bore a fixed and academic method. No one of them approached the head of Scott in vigor and strength; even in that head, Gilbert looked in vain to see some evidence of the real man, some touch of character. Here was merely a dignified professor of history. Again, he studied the pictures carefully, one after another. There was training in them, knowledge, conscientiousness, and some boldness; but there went along with this a fixity, a lack of buoyancy, fluency, or freedom; a lack, too, of adequate ideas. One and all suggested overtraining, without corresponding growth of mind and character. With the odd persistency of a tired brain, the idea kept being repeated to Gilbert that the pictures showed an energetic, hard-working, narrow woman, whom life had touched with no revolts, with none of her miracles. In Alice's work there was neither love, nor loss, nor achievement; life had never once taken the brush out of her hand.

Gilbert sat with his sister's pictures around him. By and bye he ceased to observe them, his eyes closed, he began to think. His mind, alert and keen, seemed for the moment to be divided from his body, and to pursue its reflections impersonally.

He had reached another platform, and, good or bad, the years lay behind him, like steps by whose aid he had ascended. As during the summer of Alice's departure—that important summer when he was twenty—he was conscious of looking forward, of looking back. The great heights lay before him, no less hard to scale upon this nearer view; but he was not discouraged when he saw that at least he stood above the valleys. Here his mind left himself and began to look among those he loved, to trace their course during these same years. Dick was dead; that chapter of comradeship

was closed. It was Gilbert's first real loss through death, and, as it faced him, he covered his eyes with his hands. To associate silence, immobility, dissolution, with that vivid, ardent, sparkling nature, filled to the brim with life! Sorrow swept over Gilbert like a wave, brought tears which he was not ashamed of, then ebbed, and left him calmer. He rested his head back and closed his eyes, and his thought began to take the shape and colours of a dream. He seemed to see them all, those who had been closest to him, as if they stood side by side, competitors in a great race. The years stretched out like a long, shining track. Alice stood first, ready and confident, Scott next her; then Dick and himself, shoulder to shoulder, grasping each other by the hand. Philippa he saw, the love and desire of good shining in her eyes; next to Philippa, the swift and wonderful picture of Valentine. He seemed to hear their talk and laughter, their glad predictions of success, their generous wishes to each other. A signal was given, and the figures scattered like dust in the wind. Gilbert half smiled at his own imaginings, as he appeared at once to watch, and be himself pressing steadily onward. The footfalls of the others died out behind, and—was it imagination, or were there fewer than at the start? Scott, having covered a good part of the road, had rested content; Philippa, it seemed, had quitted the race altogether to become an observer. The speed of Alice was slackening. He had just seen Dick throw up his arms and fall. Only Valentine was gaining, gaining; and around her the silence was unbroken by a footfall. Gilbert opened his eyes. His dream broke like a bubble, but the reality it had suggested remained. Must it be the price of development, of independent thought, that he found no one with whom to share his intellectual life, that he stood at the outset of life so lonely? He had left them all; he was

ahead perhaps, but he was without a companion, knowing that now and in the future when he touched men, it must be with adaptation. Yet he could do good, accomplish much, make himself beloved. He could make his life one of pure work, and of sympathy informing work. This he would do, this should be his life; and he must not be discouraged that in the main his ideals must absorb and content him. Gilbert felt that from this moment he must set his face toward that immortal garland, and steadfastly pursue it, "not without dust and heat"; with the full knowledge that he who gains it does so, in an utter loneliness of soul.

THE END

APPLETONS' TOWN AND COUNTRY LIBRARY.

PUBLISHED SEMIMONTHLY.

1. *The Steel Hammer.* By L. ULBACH.
2. *Eve.* By S. BARING-GOULD.
3. *For Fifteen Years.* By L. ULBACH.
4. *A Counsel of Perfection.* By L. MALET.
5. *The Deemster.* By H. CAINE.
- 5½. *The Bondman.* By H. CAINE.
6. *A Virginia Inheritance.* By E. PENDLETON.
7. *Ninette.* By the author of *Véra*.
8. *"The Right Honourable."* By J. MCCARTHY and MRS. CAMPBELL-PRAED.
9. *The Silence of Dean Matland.* By M. GRAY.
10. *Mrs. Lormer.* By L. MALET.
11. *The Elect Lady.* By G. MACDONALD.
12. *The Mystery of the "Ocean Star."* By W. C. RUSSELL.
13. *Aristocracy.*
- 14. *A Recoiling Vengeance.* By F. BARRETT.
15. *The Secret of Fontaine-la-Croix.* By M. FIELD.
16. *The Master of Rathkelly.* By H. SCOTT.
17. *Donovan.* By E. LYALL.
18. *This Mortal Coil.* By G. ALLEN.
19. *A Fair Emigrant.* By R. MULHOLLAND.
20. *The Apostate.* By E. DAUDET.
21. *Raleigh Westgate.* By H. K. JOHNSON.
22. *Arius the Libyan.*
23. *Constance and Calbot's Rival.* By J. HAWTHORNE.
24. *We Two.* By E. LYALL.
25. *A Dreamer of Dreams.* By the author of *Thoth*.
26. *The Ladies' Gallery.* By J. MCCARTHY and MRS. CAMPBELL-PRAED.
27. *The Reproach of Annesley.* By M. GRAY.
28. *Near to Happiness.*
29. *In the Wire Grass.* By L. PENDLETON.
30. *Lace.* By P. LINDAU.
- 30½. *The Black Poodle.* By F. ANSTET.
31. *American Coin.* By the author of *Aristocracy*.
32. *Won by Waiting.* By E. LYALL.
33. *The Story of Helen Davenant.* By V. FANE.
34. *The Light of Her Countenance.* By H. H. BOYSEN.
35. *Mistress Beatrice Cope.* By M. E. LE CLERC.
36. *The Knight-Errent.* By E. LYALL.
37. *In the Golden Days.* By E. LYALL.
38. *Ghraldi.* By R. G. DERING.
39. *A Hardy Norseman.* By E. LYALL.
40. *The Romance of Jenny Harlowe, and Sketches of Maritime Life.* By W. C. RUSSELL.
41. *Passion's Slave.* By R. ASHE-KING.
42. *The Awakening of Mary Fenwick.* By B. WHITBY.
43. *Countess Loreley.* By R. MENGER.
44. *Blind Love.* By W. COLLINS.
45. *The Dean's Daughter.* By S. F. F. VEITCH.
46. *Countess Irene.* By J. FOGERTY.
47. *Robert Browning's Principal Shorter Poems.*
48. *Frozen Hearts.* By G. W. APPLETON.
49. *Djambek the Georgian.* By A. G. VON SUTTNER.
50. *The Craze of Christian Engelhart.* By H. F. DARNELL.
51. *Lal.* By W. A. HAMMOND, M. D.
52. *Alma.* By H. GRÉVILLE.
53. *Joost Avellingh.* By M. MAARENS.
54. *Katy of Caloctin.* By G. A. TOWNSEND.
55. *Throckmorton.* By M. E. SEAWELL.
56. *Expatriation.* By the author of *Aristocracy*.
57. *Geoffrey Hampstead.* By T. S. JARVIS.
58. *Dmitri.* By F. W. BAIN, M. A.
59. *Part of the Property.* By B. WHITBY.
60. *Bismarck in Private Life.* By a Fellow-Student.
61. *In Low Relief.* By M. ROBERTS.
62. *The Canadians of Old.* By P. GASPÉ.
63. *A Squire of Low Degree.* By L. A. LONG.
64. *A Fluttered Dovecot.* By G. M. FENN.
65. *The Nugents of Carriconna.* By T. HOPKINS.
66. *A Sensitive Plant.* By E. and D. GERAUD.
67. *Doña Luz.* By J. VALERA. Translated by MRS. M. J. SERRANO.
68. *Pepita Ximenez.* By J. VALERA. Translated by MRS. M. J. SERRANO.
69. *The Primes and their Neighbors.* By R. M. JOHNSTON.
70. *The Iron Game.* By H. F. KEERAN.
71. *Stories of Old New Spain.* By T. A. JANVIER.
72. *The Maid of Honor.* By HON. L. WINGFIELD.
73. *In the Heart of the Storm.* By M. GRAY.
74. *Consequences.* By E. CASTLE.

APPLETONS' TOWN AND COUNTRY LIBRARY.—(Continued.)

75. *The Three Miss Kings.* By A. CAMBRIDGE.
76. *A Matter of Skill.* By B. WHITEY.
77. *Maid Marian, and Other Stories.* By M. E. SEAWELL.
78. *One Woman's Way.* By E. PENDLETON.
79. *A Merciful Divorce.* By F. W. MAUDE.
80. *Stephen Ellcott's Daughter.* By Mrs. J. H. NEEDELL.
81. *One Reason Why.* By B. WHITEY.
82. *The Tragedy of Ida Noble.* By W. C. RUSSELL.
83. *The Johnstown Stage, and Other Stories.* By R. H. FLETCHER.
84. *A Widow Indeed.* By R. BROUGHTON and E. BISLAND.
85. *The Flight of a Shadow.* By G. MACDONALD.
86. *Love or Money.* By K. LEE.
87. *Not All in Vain.* By A. CAMBRIDGE.
88. *It Happened Yesterday.* By F. MARSHALL.
89. *My Guardian.* By A. CAMBRIDGE.
90. *The Story of Philip Methuen.* By Mrs. J. H. NEEDELL.
91. *Amethyst.* By C. R. COLERIDGE.
92. *Don Braulito.* By J. VALERA. Translated by C. BELL.
93. *The Chronicles of Mr. Bill Williams.* By R. M. JOHNSTON.
94. *A Queen of Curds and Cream.* By D. GERARD.
95. *"La Bella" and Others.* By E. CASTLE.
96. *"December Roses."* By Mrs. CAMPBELL-PRAED.
97. *Jean de Kerdren.* By J. SCHULTZ.
98. *Etelka's Vow.* By D. GERARD.
99. *Cross Currents.* By M. A. DICKENS.
100. *His Life's Magnet.* By T. ELSLIE.
101. *Passing the Love of Women.* By Mrs. J. H. NEEDELL.
102. *In Old St. Stephen's.* By J. DRAKE.
103. *The Berkeleys and their Neighbors.* By M. E. SEAWELL.
104. *Mona Maclean, Medical Student.* By G. TRAVERS.
105. *Mrs. Bligh.* By R. BROUGHTON.
106. *A Stumble on the Threshold.* By J. PAYN.
107. *Hanging Moss.* By P. LINDAU.
108. *A Comedy of Elopement.* By C. REID.
109. *In the Suntime of her Youth.* By B. WHITEY.
110. *Stories in Black and White.* By T. HARDY and Others.
- 110A. *An Englishman in Paris.*
111. *Commander Mendoza.* By J. VALERA.
112. *Dr. Paul's Theory.* By Mrs. A. M. DIEHL.
113. *Children of Destiny.* By M. E. SEAWELL.
114. *A Little Minz.* By A. CAMBRIDGE.
115. *Capt'n Davy's Honeymoon.* By H. CAINE.
116. *The Voice of a Flower.* By E. GERARD.
117. *Singularly Deluded.* By S. GRAND.
118. *Suspected.* By L. STRATENUS.
119. *Lucia, Hugh, and Another.* By Mrs. J. H. NEEDELL.
120. *The Tutor's Secret.* By V. CHERBULIEZ.
121. *From the Five Rivers.* By Mrs. F. A. STEEL.
122. *An Innocent Impostor, and Other Stories.* By M. GRAY.
123. *Ideals.* By S. GRAND.
124. *A Comedy of Masks.* By E. DOWSON and A. MOORE.
125. *Relics.* By F. MACNAB.
126. *Dodo: A Detail of the Day.* By E. F. BENSON.
127. *A Woman of Forty.* By E. STUART.
128. *Diana Tenpest.* By M. CHOLMONDELEY.
129. *The Recipe for Diamonds.* By C. J. C. HYNE.
130. *Christina Chard.* By Mrs. CAMPBELL-PRAED.
131. *A Gray Eye or So.* By F. F. MOORE.
132. *Earls Court.* By A. ALLARDYCE.
133. *A Marriage Ceremony.* By A. CAMBRIDGE.
134. *A Ward in Chancery.* By Mrs. ALEXANDER.
135. *Lot 15.* By D. GERARD.
136. *Our Manifold Nature.* By S. GRAND.
137. *A Costly Freak.* By M. GRAY.
138. *A Beginner.* By R. BROUGHTON.
139. *A Yellow Aster.* By Mrs. M. CAMPBELL-PRAED ("IOTA").
140. *The Rubicon.* By E. F. BENSON.
141. *The Trespasser.* By G. PARKER.
142. *The Rich Miss Riddell.* By D. GERARD.
143. *Mary Fenwick's Daughter.* By B. WHITEY.
144. *Red Diamonds.* By J. MCCARTHY.
145. *A Daughter of Music.* By G. COLMORE.
146. *Outlaw and Lavemaker.* By Mrs. CAMPBELL-PRAED.
147. *Dr. Janet of Harley Street.* By A. KENEALY.
148. *George Mandeville's Husband.* By C. E. RAIMOND.
149. *Vashti and Esther.*
150. *Timar's Two Worlds.* By M. JOKAI.
151. *A Victim of Good Luck.* By W. E. NORRIS.

APPLETONS' TOWN AND COUNTRY LIBRARY.—(Continued.)

152. *The Trail of the Sword.* By G. PARKER.
153. *A Mild Barbarian.* By E. FAWCETT.
154. *The God in the Car.* By A. HOPE.
155. *Children of Circumstance.* By Mrs. M. CAFFYN.
156. *At the Gate of Samaria.* By W. J. LOUKE.
157. *The Justification of Andrew Lebrun.* By F. BARRETT.
158. *Dust and Laurels.* By M. L. PENDERED.
159. *The Good Ship Mohock.* By W. C. RUSSELL.
160. *Noëmi.* By S. BARING-GOULD.
161. *The Honour of Savelli.* By S. L. YEATS.
162. *Kitty's Engagement.* By F. WARREN.
163. *The Mermaid.* By L. DOUGALL.
164. *An Arranged Marriage.* By D. GERARD.
165. *Eve's Ransom.* By G. GISSING.
166. *The Marriage of Esther.* By G. BOOTHBY.
167. *Fidelity.* By A. CAMBRIDGE.
168. *Into the Highways and Hedges.* By F. F. MONTESSOR.
169. *The Vengeance of James Vanstittart.* By Mrs. J. H. NEEDELL.
170. *A Study in Prejudices.* By G. PASTON.
171. *The Mistress of Quest.* By A. SERGEANT.
172. *In the Year of Jubilee.* By G. GISSING.
173. *In Old New England.* By H. BUTTERWORTH.
174. *Mrs. Musgrave—and Her Husband.* By R. MARSH.
175. *Not Counting the Cost.* By TARMAN.
176. *Out of Due Season.* By A. SERGEANT.
177. *Scylla or Charybdis?* By R. BROUGHTON.
178. *In Defence of the King.* By C. C. HOTCHKISS.
179. *A Bid for Fortune.* By G. BOOTHBY.
180. *The King of Andaman.* By J. M. COBBAN.
181. *Mrs. Tregaskiss.* By Mrs. CAMPBELL-PRAED.
182. *The Desire of the Moth.* By C. VANE.
183. *A Self-Denying Ordinance.* By M. HAMILTON.
184. *Successors to the Title.* By Mrs. L. B. WALFORD.
185. *The Lost Stradivarius.* By J. M. FAULKNER.
186. *The Wrong Man.* By D. GERARD.
187. *In the Day of Adversity.* By J. BLOUNDELLE-BURTON.
188. *Mistress Dorothy Marvin.* By J. C. SNAITH.
189. *A Flash of Summer.* By Mrs. W. K. CLIFFORD.
190. *The Dancer in Yellow.* By W. E. NORRIS.
191. *The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt.* By A. MORRISON.
192. *A Winning Hazard.* By Mrs. ALEXANDER.
193. *The Picture of Las Cruces.* By C. REID.
194. *The Madonna of a Day.* By L. DOUGALL.
195. *The Riddle Ring.* By J. MCCARTHY.
196. *A Humble Enterprise.* By A. CAMBRIDGE.
197. *Dr. Nikola.* By G. BOOTHBY.
198. *An Outcast of the Islands.* By J. CONRAD.
199. *The King's Revenge.* By C. BRAY.
200. *Denounced.* By J. BLOUNDELLE-BURTON.
201. *A Court Intrigue.* By B. THOMPSON.
202. *The Idol-Maker.* By A. SERGEANT.
203. *The Intriguers.* By J. D. BARRY.
204. *Master Ardicok, Buccaneer.* By F. H. COSTELLO.
205. *With Fortune Made.* By V. CHERBULIEZ.
206. *Fellow Travellers.* By G. TRAVERS.
207. *McLeod of the Camerons.* By M. HAMILTON.
208. *The Career of Candida.* By G. PASTON.
209. *Arrested.* By E. STUART.
210. *Tatterley.* By T. GALLON.
211. *A Pine-beck Goddess.* By Mrs. J. M. FLEMING (A. M. Kipling).
212. *Perfection City.* By Mrs. ORPEN.
213. *A Spotless Reputation.* By D. GERARD.
214. *A Galahad of the Creeks.* By S. L. YEATS.
215. *The Beautiful White Devil.* By G. BOOTHBY.
216. *The Sun of Saratoga.* By J. A. ALTSEHLER.
217. *Fierceheart, the Soldier.* By J. C. SNAITH.
218. *Marietta's Marriage.* By W. E. NORRIS.
219. *Dear Kaustina.* By R. BROUGHTON.
220. *Nilma.* By Mrs. CAMPBELL-PRAED.
221. *The Folly of Pen Harrington.* By J. STURGIS.
222. *A Colonial Free-Lance.* By C. C. HOTCHKISS.
223. *His Majesty's Greatest Subject.* By S. S. THORBURN.

APPLETONS' TOWN AND COUNTRY LIBRARY.—(Continued.)

224. *Misfancy: A Welsh Singer.* By A. RAINE.
225. *A Soldier of Manhattan.* By J. A. ALTSHULER.
226. *Fortune's Footballs.* By G. B. BUBGIN.
227. *The Clash of Arms.* By J. BLOUND-DELLE-BURTON.
228. *God's Foundling.* By A. J. DAW-SON.
229. *Miss Providence.* By D. GERARD.
230. *The Freedom of Henry Meredyth.* By M. HAMILTON.
231. *Sweethearts and Friends.* By M. GRAY.
232. *Sunset.* By B. WHITEY.
233. *A Flery Ordeal.* By TASMA.
234. *A Prince of Meachance.* By T. GAL-
LON.
235. *A Passionate Pilgrim.* By P. WHITE.
236. *This Little World.* By D. C. MUR-
RAY.
237. *A Forgotten Sin.* By D. GERARD.
238. *The Incidental Bishop.* By G. ALLEN.
239. *The Lake of Wine.* By B. CAPES.
240. *A Trooper of the Empress.* By C. ROSS.
241. *Torn Sails.* By A. RAINE.
242. *Materfamilias.* By A. CAMBRIDGE.
243. *John of Strathbourne.* By R. D. CHETWODE.
244. *The Millionaires.* By F. F. MOORE.
245. *The Looms of Time.* By Mrs. H. FRASER.
246. *The Queen's Cup.* By G. A. HENTY.
247. *Dicky Monteth.* By T. GALLON.
248. *The Lust of Hate.* By G. BOOTHBY.
249. *The Gospel Writ in Steel.* By AB-
THUR PATERSON.
250. *The Widower.* By W. E. NORRIS.
251. *The Scourge of God.* By J. BLOUND-DELLE-BURTON.
252. *Concerning Isabel Carnaby.* By ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER.
253. *The Impediment.* By DOROTHEA GERARD.
254. *Helinda—and Some Others.* By ETHEL MAUDE.
255. *The Key of the Holy House.* By ALBERT LEE.
256. *A Writer of Books.* By GEORGE PASTON.
257. *The Knight of the Golden Chain.* By R. D. CHETWODE.
258. *Richest of Withens.* By HALLI-
WELL SUTCLIFFE.
259. *The Procession of Life.* By HCB-
ACE A. VACHELL.
260. *By Berwen Banks.* By ALLEN RAINE.
261. *Pharos, the Egyptian.* By GUY BOOTHBY.
262. *Paul Carah, Cornishman.* By CHARLES LEE.
263. *Pursued by the Law.* By J. MAC-
LAREN COBBAN.
264. *Madame Izan.* By Mrs. CAMP-
BELL-PRAED.
265. *Fortune's my Foe.* By J. BLOUND-
DELLE-BURTON.
266. *A Cosmopolitan Comedy.* By ANNA ROBESON BROWN.
267. *The Kingdom of Hate.* By T. GALLON.
268. *The Game and the Candle.* By RHODA BROUGHTON.
269. *Dr. Nikola's Experiment.* By GUY BOOTHBY.
270. *The Strange Story of Hester Wynne.* By G. COLMORE.
271. *Lady Barbarity.* By J. C. SNAITH.
272. *A Bitter Heritage.* By JOHN BLOUND-DELLE-BURTON.
273. *The Mistress of the Season.* By Sir WILLIAM MAGNAY, Bart.
274. *A Voyage at Anchor.* By W. CLARK RUSSELL.
275. *The Idol of the Blind.* By T. GALLON.
276. *A Corner of the West.* By EDITH HENRIETTA FOWLER.
277. *The Story of Ronald Kestrel.* By A. J. DAWSON.
278. *The World's Mercy.* By MAX-
WELL GRAY.
279. *The Gentleman Pensioner.* By ALBERT LEE.
280. *A Maker of Nations.* By GUY BOOTHBY.

"In their 'Town and Country Library,' as it is known familiarly, the Messrs. Appleton have been remarkably successful both in preserving a good standard and in the matter of popularity. Presumably this is one of the very few efforts of the kind which have been successful for more than a few months. And we think the secret of continued success lies in the discrimination used in selecting tales that are clean, pure, and withal of interest to the average reader's intelligence; and, furthermore, to the fact that the editors have been using American stories more and more frequently."—*New York Mail and Express.*

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

FÉLIX GRAS'S ROMANCES.

The White Terror.

A Romance. Translated from the Provençal by Mrs. Catharine A. Janvier. Uniform with "The Reds of the Midi" and "The Terror." 16mo. Cloth, \$1.50.

"No one has done this kind of work with finer poetic grasp or more convincing truthfulness than Félix Gras. . . . This new volume has the spontaneity, the vividness, the intensity of interest of a great historical romance."—*Philadelphia Times*.

The Terror.

A Romance of the French Revolution. Uniform with "The Reds of the Midi." Translated by Mrs. Catharine A. Janvier. 16mo. Cloth, \$1.50.

"If Félix Gras had never done any other work than this novel, it would at once give him a place in the front rank of the writers of to-day. . . . 'The Terror' is a story that deserves to be widely read, for, while it is of thrilling interest, holding the reader's attention closely, there is about it a literary quality that makes it worthy of something more than a careless perusal."—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

The Reds of the Midi.

An episode of the French Revolution. Translated from the Provençal by Mrs. Catharine A. Janvier. With an Introduction by Thomas A. Janvier. With Frontispiece. 16mo. Cloth, \$1.50.

"I have read with great and sustained interest 'The Reds of the South,' which you were good enough to present to me. Though a work of fiction, it aims at painting the historical features, and such works if faithfully executed throw more light than many so-called histories on the true roots and causes of the Revolution, which are so widely and so gravely misunderstood. As a novel it seems to me to be written with great skill."—*William E. Gladstone*.

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

By ELEANOR STUART.

Averages.

A Novel of Modern New York. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.50.

"To picture a scheming woman who is also attractive and even lovable is not an easy task. . . . To have made such a woman plausible and real in the midst of modern New York life is what Miss Stuart has achieved in this novel. And the other characters reach a similar reality. They are individuals and not types, and, moreover, they are not literary echoes. For a writer to manage this assortment of original characters with that cool deliberation which keeps aloof from them, but remorselessly pictures them, is a proof of literary insight and literary skill. It takes work as well as talent. The people of the story are real, plausible, modern creatures, with the fads and weaknesses of to-day."—*N. Y. Life*.

"The strength of the book is its entertaining pictures of human nature and its shrewd, incisive observations upon the social problems, great and small, which present themselves in the complex life of society in the metropolis. Those who are fond of dry wit, a subtle humor, and what Emerson calls 'a philosophy of insight and not of tradition,' will find 'Averages' a novel to their taste. . . . There are interesting love episodes and clever, original situations. An author capable of such work is to be reckoned with. She has in her the root of the matter."—*N. Y. Mail and Express*.

Stonepastures.

12mo. Cloth, 75 cents.

"The story is strongly written, there being a decided Bronte flavor about its style and English. It is thoroughly interesting and extremely vivid in its portrayal of actual life."—*Boston Courier*.

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.





